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EDUCATIONAL ASPECTS OF SPIRITUAL
"DIRECTION IN ROMAN CATHOLIC THOUGHT

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by
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Spiritual direction" is a little known dimension of the educational practice of the Roman Catholic Church and is little known outside the institutional confines of this branch of Christendom. Its practice, long associated with the mystics and ascetical-mystical theology, has remained almost exclusively within the education program for the training of "religious" (priests, monks and nuns) in the Roman Church. As a result, its inherent educational values have not been explored by Protestant churches. The purpose of this thesis will be to describe the origin, the nature, the process and the development of "spiritual direction" as an educative process within the Roman Catholic Church.

"Spiritual direction may be defined as 'instruction and encouragement of individuals on the way of perfection.'"¹ This definition embodies most of the concepts of spiritual, educational and theological import of spiritual direction from a traditional perspective. By dissecting the above statement our subject will be introduced insofar

¹Gerald Kelly, Guidance for Religious (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1957), p. 111.

as its theological setting, its basic approach and its purpose.

Spiritual is used to distinguish that aspect of life which is more than the "life of the senses"² and is descriptive of the qualities and fruits of life having to do with the inner, deeper nature of man and his relationship to God and his fellow man. This is predicated on the conviction that man is a spiritual being or soul which has an existence in a dimension or state that transcends the material nature of things. This dimension is often referred to as the supernatural, meaning that which is above or more than the natural world of the senses. Most of the writers read in connection with this thesis did not indicate a belief in the supernatural as being over against the natural but rather as of a higher nature than the latter. The natural must be transcended if man is to realize his full potential in this life and in the future life.

There is considerable emphasis in the discussion of spiritual and supernatural to indicate a primary concern about the future or eternal life to come. Yet there was enough stress on the present life to indicate that spiritual direction had as one of its aims preparation for living to the fullest in this earthly life. As one writer says, "The super natural life, as distinct from the natural, is

²Joseph de Guibert, The Theology of the Spiritual Life (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1953), p. 3.

composed of (1) acts by which man freely tends toward his supernatural end, the intuitive vision of God, to which he has been destined; (2) the grace and habits given to man to enable him to attain this end."³ Supernatural and spiritual are generally used interchangeably to refer to the "interior life" of man in its pilgrimage toward greater awareness of God and ultimate oneness or union with Him.

Direction is used in the sense of guidance by precept and example of a more experienced, knowledgeable person. It is a one-to-one relationship involving instruction in the ways of the spiritual life and giving aid and encouragement to the one being directed toward perfection.

Perfection means total or complete charity (love) so the "way of perfection" is to live a life of complete love or a life completely motivated by love. According to the definition the aim of spiritual direction is to help individuals "on the way of perfection," thus recognizing that perfection is to be worked toward rather than achieved once and for all time.

The spiritual or supernatural life is the state of a man "on the way of perfection." The combination of these two ideas is expressed as spiritual perfection and this "means in a general way a certain fullness of the spiritual life which lacks nothing for its complete development in

³Ibid.

this world or in the next."⁴ This fullness includes the vision of God who is love and whose grace enables men to aspire to perfection.

Briefly it should be noted that while spiritual direction is the process by which a person progresses in the spiritual life, the spiritual director serves only as an agent in the process. The true Spiritual Director is the Holy Spirit. "Spiritual direction is a cooperation with the activity of the Holy Spirit of God in the same sanctification of souls, and with the Guardian Angels in directing men to the heavenly home."⁵ It was St. John of the Cross who delineated this idea when he wrote that "the principal guide is the Holy Spirit, Who is never neglectful of souls,..."⁶

Spiritual direction originated in the New Testament Church and several writers refer to Ananias, the man sent by the Holy Spirit to Saul following his conversion, as the first spiritual director. From this incident it is traced through the writings and practices of the Early Church fathers, through the monastic movement and through its full development in the writings of the mystics of the

⁴Ibid.

⁵Pascal P. Parente, Spiritual Direction (St. Meinard, Ind.: Abbey Press, 1950), p. vi.

⁶St. John of the Cross, The Collected Works (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1964), p. 627.

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Spiritual direction was an essential part of the formation of the lives of those who sought to follow the ascetical and mystical ways of life. The theology developed to serve as a corrective to experience for those devoting themselves to these life styles is now a special branch of Roman Catholic theology. It is distinguished from Dogmatic Theology, founded on Scripture and Tradition and Moral Theology, founded on "the commandments and virtues in so far as they are obligatory."⁷

Ascetical looks upon perfection as procurable by one's own acts and efforts by reforming one's life and living according to the commandments, and counsels and the example of Christ and the Saints. Mystical regards perfection as a gift of God formed in us by the action of divine grace, and especially as it is formed by that operation under which the soul is passive to a great degree, so that at length the union of the soul with God through and in Christ may be consummated. Thus any spiritual life is at once ascetical and mystical.⁸

From what has been said regarding spiritual direction one can see where it fits into the process of forming the ascetical-mystical life style. The director instructs the person being directed in the basic principles of the spiritual life and guides his efforts in living up to these principles. The two approaches are referred to in tandem because it came to be recognized that both the action of

⁷Guibert, op. cit., p. 6.

⁸Ibid., p. 10.

God and the action of the human will are necessary to spiritual development. [It has been my observation that the mystical emphasis is found more in the writings of those contemporary with the Protestant Reformation or immediately afterward.]

Contemporary approaches to spiritual direction show the influence of psychotherapy and pastoral psychology. Some writers favor the waning of traditional direction and the ascendance of pastoral counseling whereas others point to the place of both in the church's ministry to persons. The former group seem to be resisting the theology of the spiritual life whereas the latter group sees the place for both moral theology and ascetical-mystical theology. The similarities of counseling and spiritual direction in their emphasis on the one-to-one relationship and the trained person serving as guide seem to be a real factor in the problem.

The differences are notable. Counseling and therapy have as their aim or purpose the helping of people rediscover the ability to cope with life when this ability has been lost. Spiritual direction is for persons who are mentally and emotionally stable and who desire to deepen their spiritual consciousness of God and His love. The present day advocates of spiritual direction point up these differences, and yet are aware they have an ally in these

movements. They recognize that the relationship of counseling and spiritual direction

is a complementary one. ...they go hand in hand even though preferably given by different persons. Not everyone needs counseling, of course--only those who have problems which are primarily emotional and motivational. On the other hand everyone can profit from good spiritual direction.⁹

While there is an element of counseling involved in spiritual direction, it is primarily an educative process as indicated by the definition cited. Another says, "The object of spiritual direction consists in all that has a bearing upon the spiritual formation of souls."¹⁰ Where knowledge is lacking it must be provided by instruction; where sin is causing guilt, confession must be heard; and, where defective thinking or defective spiritual attitudes are present, these must be discerned and help given to enable the directed to bring his life into harmony with the leading of the Holy Spirit.

As one contemporary writer has said,

A director is one who is able to teach souls spiritual doctrine in a way that is adapted to their needs. Naturally, beginners in the spiritual life require more lengthy instruction, but as time goes on the need for explicit instruction progressively diminishes. And finally, the director is one who encourages and 'urges the soul on by arousing and helping the will, by making sure

⁹John T. Byrne, "The Counselor and Spiritual Director," Homiletic and Pastoral Review, LIX (March 1959), 542.

¹⁰Adolphe Tanquerey, The Spiritual Life (Tournai, Belgium: Desclee, 1930), p. 262.

that the soul does not stop at resolving but that it goes on to action...' Thus spiritual direction is an educative process in the fullest sense of the word.¹¹

In light of these factors I will explore spiritual direction as "an educative process" as it is understood and practiced within the Roman Catholic Church. To best accomplish this I will begin with a survey of its historical development, proceed to a discussion of its theological setting, describe its nature and practice, and conclude with recent developments in its practice.

I will draw conclusions in light of the Roman Catholic writers, then present a critique of the process by comparing and contrasting contemporary personality and educational theory with that I view as those underlying spiritual direction. As a part of this critique I will present what to me is the challenge of spiritual direction for Protestants.

In the appendices I will present, first, basic principles of spiritual direction as developed in a contemporary Protestant Church, and secondly, a description of the influence of the practice of spiritual direction on Baron Friedrich von Hügel, followed by his practice as a spiritual director for his niece and for Evelyn Underhill. These are given as examples of the practice of spiritual direction.

¹¹Michael Griffin, "How to Profit from Spiritual Direction," Spiritual Life, XIII (Summer 1967), 102.

CHAPTER II

THE ORIGINS OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Spiritual direction, as practiced within the Roman Catholic Church, was an integral part of the development of the monastic movement. As one writer noted: "In early Oriental Christianity spiritual direction seems to have developed chiefly because of its utility in the formation of monks, although it had broader roots."¹ Before discussing its development within the monastic movement, for it was here that it took its essential shape as an educative process, the "broader roots" need exploring.

BIBLICAL BASIS FOR DIRECTION

Faber says: "According to the teaching of the Fathers, the office of spiritual director is shadowed forth in Scripture in the relations of Samuel to Heli, Peter to Cornelius, and Ananias to Paul."² To this list could have been added Elisha to Elijah, Timothy to Paul and possibly others. These are one-to-one teaching relationships that are found between pupil and prophet, disciple and guru and

¹K. A. Wall, "Spiritual Direction," New Catholic Encyclopedia, IV, 888.

²Frederick William Faber, Growth in Holiness (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1950), p. 330.

monk and spiritual father. As further grounding for the practice of spiritual direction another writer quotes two passages from Ecclesiasticus: "My son, do thou nothing without counsel: and thou shalt not repent what thou has done." But the sacred writer advises caution: "Be in peace with many: but let one in a thousand be thy counselor."³ Scripture and Tradition are thus appealed to in support of the practice of spiritual direction.

Within Judaism the "schools of prophets" were a model for the ascetics who were the forerunners of true monasticism. The yogi and his disciples of Hinduism and the sophists and their pupils of ancient Greece exemplify the same kinds of relationships. While these expressions cannot explicitly be identified as having provided the pattern for the practices of the monastic movement, they do serve to illustrate the "natural" process by which spiritual understanding is sought and shared.

The guidance and instruction given by one more experienced and learned in the spiritual life to another who desires and seeks help is then a universal characteristic of religion. Yet these characteristics are associated primarily with the ascetical and mystical movements within most religions and Christianity is no exception. This process is founded on the basic premise that a person

³Thomas Verner Moore, The Life of Man with God (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1956), p. 355.

cannot teach what he has not experienced something of for himself. The need for special guidance and instruction arises out of an individual feeling that there is "more" to religion than he now knows and an inner desire to experience something of this "more."

THE GOAL OF PERFECTION

Within the early church there were those who took seriously the Gospel admonition "to be perfect" because they saw it as a description of the "more." Therefore they sought ways by which they could become more nearly "perfect" spiritually. Some sought this state through prayer and discipline while others sought it through charismatic gifts.

The Gnostics, following the pagan schools of philosophy, considered that the perfect life consisted in knowledge and contemplation, and, taking their cue from the religious mysteries of the pagans which purported to perfect their followers by revelation of secrets, they distinguish the perfect from ordinary Christians, and the pagans, by reason of their deeper religious knowledge or fuller understanding of revealed truth. Traces of this concept of perfection are to be found even in such men as Clement of Alexandria and Origen.

The Montanists sought perfection in the gifts of prophecy and ecstasy.⁴

Excesses such as the above were rejected as their exponents were branded heretics but their ideas never

⁴Joseph de Guibert, The Theology of the Spiritual Life (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1953), p. 44.

completely disappear from the mystical theology of the Church.

Perfection as a mark of the nature of the Christian life became more and more the central feature of ascetical life and practices in the early Church. As noted Clements of Alexandria (192 A.D.) and Origen (fl. 230 A.D.) wrote on the subject as did Tertullian (fl. 199) and St. Cyprian (fl. 248).⁵ It was St. Anthony (251-356) who, in his effort to become perfect, withdrew from the world and set the pattern for religious life for over one thousand years.⁶

The followers of St. Anthony came to him primarily from their desire to become hermits, as they saw little chance of becoming perfect while living in a corrupt world. Those who came to him came voluntarily and asked him to be their instructor and director.⁷ St. Pachomius, a contemporary of St. Anthony, founded the first monastery, and "required spiritual instruction be given at three different periods"⁸ with the second "after official admission into the community."⁹ "..., in the final period selected subject matter concerning spiritual perfection and discipline

⁵Adolph Kestens, Spiritual Guidance (Paterson, N.J.: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1962), p. 19.

⁶Nicholas Gill, The Spiritual Prefect in Clerical Religious Houses of Study (Washington: Catholic University of American Press, 1945), p. 11.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 12.

⁹Ibid.

was treated two or three times a week."¹⁰

DIRECTORS AMONG THE CHURCH FATHERS

Others of the late third and early fourth centuries were noted for their practice of spiritual direction. St. Ambrose was said to have been a "true master of the art of spiritual direction."¹¹ His influence on St. Augustine was considerable.¹² St. Jerome was "an excellent teacher, but an even more adept director of souls."¹³ St. Augustine, himself, was "an authority in spiritual direction."¹⁴

..., St. Basil the Great (+366), has the following norm: "All those that are under obedience, if they really wish to make great progress and to persevere with great stability in the state of life which is according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall never hide within themselves any secret motion of their soul nor ever utter any inconsiderate word without revealing every secret of their heart to those brethren who have been appointed for a kind and sympathetic care of the weaker ones."¹⁵

While these early Fathers certainly practiced spiritual direction and were instrumental in its development, the first writer, whose works have survived, to deal at length with its practice was Cassian (ca. 360-435), the founder of western monasticism. Doyle says,

¹⁰Ibid., p. 13. ¹¹Wall, loc. cit.

¹²Kenneth Scott Latourette, The First Five Centuries (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1937), p. 185.

¹³Wall, loc. cit. ¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Pascal P. Parente, Spiritual Direction, Revised Edition (New York: St. Paul, 1961), p. 21.

The Abbot Cassian, who spent years among the monks of the Holy Land and Egypt, has grouped their teachings along with his own on the matter of spiritual direction. For instance, in his work, Book of Institutions, he exhorts the young cenobites to bear their hearts to the elder charged with the direction of their lives and to disclose to him without false shame their most secret thoughts, and submit themselves entirely to his decision as to what is good and what is evil.¹⁶

Cassian stressed, as had St. Anthony, "that those who sought the higher life should learn from the religious already in possession of the desired virtues."¹⁷

While Rules were being formulated to serve as guides for those who would live the life of perfection, voices such as that of St. Augustine (354-430) could be heard warning that the "practice of virtue rather than strict rules commanding specific duties"¹⁸ is more desirable. Usually those who formulated the Rules were men of special graces and spiritual gifts who wrote their guides only at the insistence of their followers who admired them and feared the loss of their influence when they were gone. The Rules were intended as guides only, but the followers, lacking the same graces and gifts, had to adhere to the letter rather than the spirit of their teacher.

The purpose of becoming a hermit after the example of St. Anthony or joining a religious community such as those

¹⁶Charles Hugo Doyle, Guidance in Spiritual Direction (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1959), p. 5.

¹⁷Gill, op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁸Ibid.

founded by St. Pachomius or Cassian was to achieve a life of Christian perfection. Those who sought the life of a hermit believed that the only way to avoid the temptation of things was to give up all claims to personal property and live alone in their search. They also came to believe that this was the only way to avoid the sin of lust and thus they took personal vows of poverty and chastity. When it was discovered that these practices could be practiced just as well in a community, monasteries were formed and another vow was added to insure harmony, the vow of obedience to one's superior. These vows were made voluntarily and those unable to keep them were excluded from the community.

Since the hermits were individuals seeking alone, they, as has been noted, voluntarily sought another hermit who possessed the virtues that seemed desirable to guide him. According to some of the stories told these hermits often refused this help for fear of losing what they felt they had achieved by their separation. St. Anthony seems to have been one who, having achieved sufficient inner graces and self-discipline, could travel about teaching and giving direction to others who desired his help. His influence is thus considered a major contribution to the monastic movement and to the development of the practice of spiritual direction.

Cassian had held to the three stages of the religious life described by St. Pachomius to indicate general awareness of levels of development or achievement. St. John Climacus, who was to the eastern monks what Cassian was to the West,¹⁹ gave advice to beginners and to those further along the way of perfection.

To beginners he says that those who wish to leave the land of Egypt for the promised land and subdue their disorderly passions, stand in need of another Moses to serve as their guide. To those who are advanced he declares, that in order to follow Christ and enjoy the holy liberty of the children of God, one must humbly deliver the care of one's soul to a man that is the representative of the Divine Master; and that such a one must be chosen with care, because he must be obeyed in all simplicity, in spite of the shortcomings that may be detected in him; for the sole danger lies in following one's own judgment.²⁰

The above indicates the awareness of the need for community to enable one to live the Christian life which marks a century of development in the ascetical movement in the church. By the time another century had passed the pattern of monastic movement had been established with the Rule of St. Benedict of Nursia who founded the monastery at Monte Cassino about 529.²¹

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS OF DIRECTION

Little was written on the subject of spiritual

¹⁹Adolphe Tanquerey, The Spiritual Life (Tournai, Belgium: Desclee, 1930), p. 258.

²⁰Ibid. ²¹Latourette, op. cit., p. 66.

direction from the seventh through the eleventh centuries and its practice is said to have actually declined during the Carolingian renaissance.²² In the resources surveyed no reason is given for this, but because of the special nature of spiritual direction it can be assumed the mere struggle for survival in the Dark Ages allowed for little interest in deepening the spiritual life. The main concern of the Church during this period was the conversion of the pagans who had conquered Europe.

Toward the end of the eleventh century St. Anselm (1033-1109) began a revival of interest in mystical religious practices and because of his stature as a spiritual leader it can be assumed he served as spiritual director to priests and bishops. Following him St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) exerted the primary spiritual force on the whole of Europe during his later life and became known as one of the most selfless spiritual leaders of the Church. "St. Bernard advises novices to have a guide 'to enlighten them, direct them, console them and encourage them.'"²³

St. Bonaventure (1221-1274) who came almost a century after St. Bernard, was also a mystic, a theologian and a philosopher who wrote in the spiritual life. During this same period the Dominicans (founded in 1216) are noted as

²²Wall, loc. cit.

²³Doyle, op. cit., p. 6.

being strong in the practice of spiritual direction.

In the Fourteenth Century, the eloquent Dominican, St. Vincent Ferrer, stated that spiritual direction had ever been the practice of souls that wished to make progress, and he gave the following reason, 'He who has an advisor whom he absolutely obeys in all things, will succeed much more easily and quickly than he could, if left to himself, even if endowed with quick intellect and possessed of learned spiritual books.'²⁴

In the same century the Dutch mystic, Ruysbroeck (1293-1381), stressed the necessity of spiritual direction.²⁵

St. Pachomius and Cassian, followers of the ascetical life, had stressed three stages or steps to perfection and now Ruysbroeck suggests there are three steps or stages in the "spiritual ladder" by which the spirit of man climbs toward God. These three stages are: (1) the active life "which consists of outward acts, such as abstinence from things harmful, deeds of penance, acts of self-denial, the performance of virtuous deeds;"²⁶ and, (2) the inward life which acts are done out of love from within as one experiences the love and will of God within; and, (3) the contemplative life--"to which only a few attain, and which is an experience for pinnacle moments rather than a plateau where the soul normally tabernacles."²⁷ Ruysbroeck thus describes a corresponding three stages for the mystical life.

²⁴Tanqueray, op. cit., p. 258. ²⁵Wall, loc. cit.

²⁶Rufus M. Jones, Studies in Mystical Religion (London: Macmillan, 1923), p. 310.

²⁷Ibid., p. 312.

Gerard Groote (1340-1384), a disciple of Ruysbroeck, founded the Brethren of the Common Life, whose most famous member was Thomas á Kempis (c. 1380-1471), the reputed author of *The Imitation of Christ*. It was Groote's disciple, Florentius Radewin, who served as "his teacher, his adviser and his friend--'My good father and sweet master,' he calls him."²⁸ This association probably caused Thomas a Kempis to place "great importance on spiritual direction as one of four ways to obtain deep peace of soul."²⁹

These proponents of the mystical-ascetical life who lived from the twelfth through the fifteenth centuries set the stage for the golden age of the development of mystical-ascetical theology which has as its chief method of propagation spiritual direction.

Through the influence of St. Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556) "the character of spiritual direction changed. It became institutionalized and empirical."³⁰ Loyola, under the influence of having spent considerable time reading the lives of the saints and a life of Christ while convalescing from wounds of a battle, entered on what became known as the Purgative Way. He spent several months practicing self-imposed austerities which in a little more than a year brought him to the second stage of the mystical life, the

²⁸Ibid., p. 324.

²⁹Wall, loc. cit.

³⁰Ibid.

Illuminative Way. At this time he wrote his little book The Spiritual Exercises, "a manual of spiritual arms, containing a vital and dynamic system of spirituality."³¹

This book was a form of spiritual direction but more on a mass basis, intended to be used by the individual. It was used extensively as a retreat manual, and Loyola himself often led such retreats. St. Philip Neri (1515-1595), "one of the outstanding figures of the Counter-Reformation,"³² was one of many who began an intense practice of spiritual direction.³³ Neri devoted his life to the formation of young men in the religious life, turning down higher appointments to continue this kind of ministry.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

The most extensive treatment of the practice of spiritual direction and the qualifications of spiritual directors among the mystics are to be found in the writings of St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) and St. John of the Cross (1542-1591). St. Teresa dealt with the subject in her autobiography entitled Life and in The Way of Perfection. This latter book, as most of her writings, was to

³¹Edward A. Ryan, "Saint Ignatius Loyola," Encyclopaedia Britannica (1965) XIV, 380-1.

³²Vivian John Manley Matthews, "Saint Philip Neri," Encyclopaedia Britannica (1965), XVI, 230.

³³Wall, op. cit., p. 890.

aid nuns under her direction to live the religious life. She belonged to the Discalced Carmelites in Spain.

St. Teresa taught that a spiritual director should possess at least three qualities; he "should be a prudent man--of sound understanding, I mean--and also an experienced one: if he is a learned man as well, that is a very great advantage."³⁴ She also warns against choosing a director who may not have the qualities, for she confesses to having suffered for many years under the direction of an imprudent director. She stressed the necessity of spiritual direction, especially for beginners. She said that for a person further along on the way of perfection a learned man was preferable and by learned she means one well grounded in both moral and mystical-ascetical theology.³⁵

Whereas St. Teresa stressed the practical side of spiritual direction St. John of the Cross put a primary emphasis on the spiritual dimension of the practice of direction. He was explicit when he wrote that

...directors should reflect that they themselves are not the chief agent, guide, and mover of souls..., but that the principle guide is the Holy Spirit, who is never neglectful of souls, and they are instruments for directing them to

³⁴St. Teresa of Jesus, The Complete Works (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1949, I, p. 80.

³⁵Ibid., p. 81.

perfection through faith and the law of God, according to the spirit God gives each one.³⁶

He goes on to say that the method by which the director made progress in the spiritual life may not be the one for others. The spiritual director "should observe the road along which God is leading them, and if he does not recognize it, he should leave them alone and not bother them."³⁷

This ability to know the state of the soul being directed required that the director have what was called the "gift of discernment," the capacity to intuitively sense the condition of a person and what was needful to progress in the way of perfection. St. Teresa and St. John placed this ability in the realm of being experienced for they saw this gift as a by-product of the mystic way.

Parente notes that:

Great directors of souls were often in possession of charismatic graces, such as the discerning of spirits, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, prophecy, cardiognosis or knowledge of the secrets of the heart.³⁸

These and other writers note that the "gift of discernment" may come as a charisma or may be learned through the practice of direction and of being directed by another.

³⁶St. John of the Cross, The Collected Works (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1964), p. 627.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Parente, op. cit., p. 37.

With the work and writings of St. Francis de Sales (1567-?) the nature and practice of spiritual direction reaches a fullness of development which since have seen only refinements and adaptation to the contemporary scene. He wrote, "Would you walk in earnest toward devotion? Seek some good man who will guide and conduct you. This is the greatest of all advice."³⁹ St. Francis, as did St. John, stressed the reality that it is God who actually does the directing with the director being an instrument. He says that the spiritual director

must be full of charity, knowledge, and prudence. If any one of these qualities is wanting in him, there is danger. But I say to you again: Ask him of God. Having found him, bless His Divine Majesty, remain constant, and seek no other, but proceed on with sincerity, humility, and confidence, for you will make a most happy journey.⁴⁰

St. Francis, as quoted above, interjects the quality of charity as necessary for a good director. He thus points to what by his day has become the pinnacle of the way of perfection and that which remains to this day the end goal of mystical-ascetical theology. The way of perfection was seen as seeking to live by vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Charity or love was an ingredient but not until St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) refined and systematized Roman Catholic theology did it become the

³⁹St. Francis de Sales, Introduction to the Devout Life (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), p. 7.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 9.

"whole" of the Christian life. Doyle quotes the pertinent passage from the Summa: "Essentially the perfection of the Christian life consists in charity, first and foremost in the love of God, then in the love of neighbor."⁴¹ The purpose of spiritual direction was always to help persons become perfect and at this point in history perfection has come to mean living a life of complete charity.

It is interesting to note that St. Thomas Aquinas, whose dogmatic theology had become normative by the time of St. Francis de Sales, was declared by Pope Pius V to be a doctor of the Church in the same year St. Francis was born--1567.⁴² The mark of his dogmatic theology can be seen on the mystical-ascetical theology of which spiritual direction is a part.

Spiritual direction has always had at least three ingredients which make it indispensable to those who feel the call to follow the mystical or ascetical path. It was the practice of discerning where the one seeking direction was in his spiritual development and guiding him from there toward perfection. It was a sharing of the methods by which one could practice mental prayer, meditation and contemplation. Then, it was instructing the person in the

⁴¹Doyle, op. cit., p. 24.

⁴²Thomas Gilby, "Saint Thomas Aquinas," Encyclopaedia Britannica (1965), II, 162.

correct doctrine and thought of the mystic or ascetic way so that the mind or intellect would be satisfied and enable the person to exercise the will in carrying out the steps toward perfection. The soul or spirit would be fed or satisfied by the grace and love of God as the person drew closer to Him. The spiritual director served to guide a person in such a way that the mind, will and soul were in harmony as the person made his spiritual journey or pilgrimage through life.

This level of development of the practice of spiritual direction was arrived at by the time of St. Francis de Sales in the sixteenth century. Contributions to this process began with the Fathers of the Desert who looked to the writings that became the New Testament for clues to the nature of the Christian life and for guidance by which they might achieve such a lofty state of existence. They found indications in the practice of Jesus and his disciples, in Paul and in his writings as well as in the Old Testament. They followed the inclinations of their own inner natures and what they felt was the Holy Spirit. Some went to excesses in their physical mortifications and others over-emphasized charismatic gifts and ecstasies with the former being considered imprudent and the latter branded heretical.

The practices of spiritual direction can be assumed to have been as divergent as the movements that contributed

to its development, yet in each it was seen as a desirable and perhaps essential part of the educative process.

CHAPTER III

THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Any educative process of the church must be grounded in theology and spiritual direction is no exception. St. Teresa's statement as to the importance of a director being a learned man has been mentioned and with this there is general agreement. This knowledge, according to Guibert, should be "primarily theological knowledge (dogmatic, practical, moral and spiritual) combined with an adequate acquaintance with the schools of spirituality."¹ This requirement of a good spiritual director encompasses all branches of Roman Catholic theology and its value can be seen when its content is briefly described.

Tanquery says that,

Dogma teaches us what we must believe of God: His divine life, the share in it which he has willed to communicate to intelligent creatures, specially to man, the forfeiting of this divine life in original sin, its restoration by the Word-made-flesh, the action of that life on the regenerated soul, its diffusion through the Sacraments, and its completion in Heaven.

Moral theology shows us how we must respond to this love of God by cultivating the divine life He made us share. It shows us how we must shun sin,

¹Joseph de Guibert, The Theology of the Spiritual Life (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1953), p. 167.

practice the virtues, and fulfill those duties of state to which we are strictly bound.²

ASCETICAL - MYSTICAL THEOLOGY

That branch which Guibert calls "Spiritual" is actually a combination of ascetical and mystical theology which he says "cannot be separated" because "both have a common purpose, the spiritual perfection of man."³ They developed from two different approaches to the spiritual life. Ascetical Theology "looks on perfection as procurable by one's own acts and efforts by reforming one's life and living according to the commandments, and counsels and the example of Christ and the Saints."⁴ The practices and experiments of the hermits of the desert and the monastic movement are mirrored in the development of Ascetical Theology. The person following this path to perfection is not alone but has available the help of the grace of God. Kestens says,

It is a true science, both deductive and inductive, because it proceeds from certain, universal principles, and eventually reaches particular application; and also because it proceeds from an accumulation of experimental facts which lead to probable principles and eventually again to particular applications.⁵

²Adolphe Tanqueray, The Spiritual Life (Tournai, Belgium: Desclee, 1930), p. 3-4.

³Guibert, op. cit., p. 11. ⁴Ibid., p. 10.

⁵Adolph Kestens, Spiritual Guidance (Paterson, N. J.; St. Anthony Guild Press, 1962), p. 8.

He later says; "The experimental knowledge of the saints, and their instructions concerning the most suitable means of perfection, constitute the foundation of Ascetical Theology."⁶

The term "mystical theology" originated with the Christian Gnostics such as Pseudo-Dionysius to refer

to a more intimate hidden and holy knowledge of God Himself arising from union with Him, superior to knowledge which is obtainable by reason alone or the ordinary teaching of the Faith.⁷

This understanding of Mystical Theology did not remain so mysterious or narrow but "came to indicate broadly the whole theological study of the spiritual life considered as a preparation for union with God in contemplation."⁸ Mystical Theology seeks to understand and describe "the extraordinary ways by which souls are united with God, and to investigate the phenomena which often accompany this union."⁹

Dogmatic and Moral Theology serve as a foundation for Spiritual Theology, to use Guibert's term, but do not deal with the how of living the precepts of Moral Theology or experiencing the realities of dogmatic theology. This realm of the how or means of growing in understanding and

⁶Ibid., p. 13. ⁷Guibert, op. cit., p. 4.

⁸Ibid., p. 5.

⁹Kestens, op. cit., p. 8.

and perfection is the special province of Spiritual Theology. The what of the spiritual life and thus of Spiritual Theology comes from the teachings and practices of the saints founded on Scripture and Tradition.

According to Tanqueray there are two methods of formulating a Spiritual theology, the experimental and the deductive.

The experimental method, also called descriptive and psychological, consists in the observation of ascetical or mystical phenomena in oneself or in others, and in classifying these in order to glean from them the characteristic marks peculiar to each state, as well as virtues and dispositions proper to them.¹⁰

He continues;

The doctrinal or deductive method consists in studying the teaching of Holy Scripture, Tradition, and theology (especially the Summa of St. Thomas) concerning the spiritual life, and in drawing conclusions about its nature and perfection, about the obligation we have of making it the aim of our efforts, and about the means to be employed.¹¹

The experimental method is based on personal experience, one's own or others, and the deductive method is on revealed knowledge. By the use of reason, which is considered a gift of God, these two are fused to form the what and how of the spiritual life to which all men are called. Kestens said, "All the faithful without exception are

¹⁰Tanqueray, op. cit., p. 12.

¹¹Ibid., p. 13-14.

called to perfection; for perfection consists essentially and principally in the love of God."¹²

Active seeking and practice in following the precepts of Spiritual Theology are a guarantee of progress on the way of perfection. This assurance is provided by the witness of the saints and by the realization that God is now and always acting in and through the Holy Spirit to provide sufficient grace to the soul on its journey. Through the practice of prayer, meditation and contemplation and by receiving the Sacraments one puts himself in the proper relationship to be able to receive grace. By the practice of the moral and theological virtues and counsels one removes the barriers to receiving the ever-present grace of God.

MORAL VIRTUES

Growth or advancement in the spiritual life is greatly aided by moral virtues. The two kinds of moral virtues are natural and infused. Natural virtues are

good habits, acquired through the frequent repetition of acts which render easy the performance of morally good actions. Thus, pagans and unbelievers can with the help of God's natural concurrence acquire and gradually perfect the moral virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance.¹³

¹²Kestens, op. cit., p. 4.

¹³Tanqueray, op. cit., p. 472.

The capacity to practice these virtues is inherent in the spiritual nature of man but are more difficult without the aid of the grace of God.

Infused virtues are those given at the moment of justification--the moment when we acknowledge our unworthiness and accept the meritorious action of God in Jesus Christ to effect our salvation. Imparted the same time is habitual grace, "a supernatural quality inherent in the soul"¹⁴ which opens to a person the possibility of union with God. It causes one to see the necessity of practicing the moral virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, sometimes called the four cardinal virtues. These virtues have in common their being steps toward the supreme virtue of charity.

Briefly the meaning and purpose of these virtues are as follows. (1) Prudence "inclines our intellect to choose in every instance the best means of attaining our aims, by subordinating them to our ultimate end."¹⁵ (2) Justice, while being singular, has two companion virtues--religion and obedience. It is, in itself, that virtue "which inclines the will to render unto others at all times what is strictly their due."¹⁶ The virtue of religion has to do with ascribing and rendering to God what is His and obedience means the submission of our wills to a superior or

¹⁴Ibid., p. 56. ¹⁵Ibid., p. 478. ¹⁶Ibid., p. 488.

superiors. (3) Fortitude is the virtue which enables a person to be persistent and consistent in search of good even in face of danger, or possible death. (4) the virtue of temperance "moderates the attraction towards sense--pleasure, especially the pleasures of the palate and the flesh, and keeps them within the proper limits of propriety."¹⁷ Three allied virtues are: (a) Chastity--conjugal for married persons and continence (celibacy) for "religious," (b) humility--the ability to see one's own worth as God sees and the realization one must seek self-effacement and contempt; and, (c) meekness--the capability of avoiding anger, of accepting others as they are and of acting with kindness in every circumstance.

While the moral virtues are of primary concern to the practice of spiritual direction the three theological virtues are of ultimate importance to the perfection of the spiritual life. These virtues are faith, hope and charity and are seen as uniting a person with God. Faith "aids us to see all, to view all things by His divine light." Hope enables "us to elicit acts of absolute trust in Him. Charity takes us up to God, infinitely good in Himself."¹⁸ These three virtues are considered to be so inter-related that if a person increases in faith and hope he will naturally increase in charity.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 517.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 64.

The relationship between the moral and theological are delineated in the following statement.

These (moral) virtues are of such moment because they remove the greater obstacles to the greater dominion of charity.

Hence also we see why the effort to progress in the moral virtues is not necessarily the same to all, some striving more intensely after one virtue, others another, while the theological virtues will always have the same import for all. This is so because the theological virtues deal directly with the end which is to be sought as ardently as possible by all, whi'lst the moral virtues are only means to an end, and do not all have the same importance and are not equally necessary or useful in the various circumstances of the spiritual life.¹⁹

GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In addition to moral and theological virtues there are special gifts of the Holy Spirit to aid a person in progress on the way to spiritual perfection. These are seven in number and "the primary basis for the whole doctrine of the Gifts in the prophecy of Isaias (11:2-3)."²⁰ While the "gifts are in no way superior to the theological virtues, their function is that of perfecting the exercise of the virtues."²¹ In addition to these seven--understanding, knowledge, fear, wisdom, counsel, piety, and fortitude--each with its special function, another special gift is integral to the practice of spiritual direction, the

¹⁹Guibert, op. cit., p. 67. ²⁰Ibid., p. 121.

²¹Tanqueray, op. cit., p. 65.

gift of the discernment of spirits. The function of the gift of discernment is to enable a person, especially a spiritual director, to intuitively know the spiritual condition of another and whether the promptings or leadings a person experiences are of God or the evil one. This gift "may be accomplished in two ways: either with the help of a charism or special grace, or by applying the rules given by spiritual and by using supernatural prudence."²²

At every step or level of the spiritual life the Holy Spirit is at work prompting and guiding. Of this whole process Guibert summarizes by saying,

It is a Catholic doctrine that the beginnings of faith and justification are the product of the prevenient grace of God. The Church also teaches that no one can persevere in justice without the help of grace, supporting his intellect and will and healing him of scars left by sin. Thirdly, it is certain that the beginning of all progress in Christian perfection comes from God's stirring of the soul, and that there can be no increase in perfection unless God enlightens and strengthens the soul. The Divine impulses and enlightenments are usually called 'the inspirations of the Holy Ghost,' insofar as they are appropriated (as in all the work of our sanctification) to the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.²³

THE PLACE OF GRACE

The importance of grace to the whole of the spiritual life has certainly been intimated and it is generally recognized to be "a mode of being, a state of soul, a

²²Guibert, op. cit., p. 135.

²³Ibid., p. 110.

quality inherent in the soul's substance that transforms it and raises it above all natural beings, even the most perfect."²⁴ Habitual grace, referred to above, enables one to become aware of the Divine presence and to receive divine gifts. "Actual grace is a supernatural transient help given us by our Lord to enlighten our mind and strengthen our will in the performance of supernatural (spiritual) acts."²⁵ Actual grace is the action or activity of the Holy Spirit made known as specific times or on special occasion to provide insight, to enable one to perform spiritual acts and to heal scars of sin. Prayer is a primary means of receiving actual grace and thus is seen the necessity of prayer to the spiritual life. Other means of receiving it are meritorious acts.

COUNSELS AND COMMANDMENTS

Two other means are available to aid a person in the progress of the spiritual life and are of special significance as they assist in one's increasing in the virtues and in grace. These are the Counsels and the Commandments which are considered to be on the same level or plane. While a knowledge of the Commandments and the keeping of them is necessary for Christian living the observance of the Counsels is but a help to perfection in that they

²⁴Tanqueray, op. cit., p. 56.

²⁵Ibid., p. 66.

remove obstacles that made its attainment more difficult.²⁶

The Counsels, sometimes called Evangelical Counsels, are the practice of voluntary poverty, perfect chastity, and spontaneous obedience. Though not essential they

remove the greatest impediments to the full dominion of charity over man's life, namely, the love of riches, the pleasures of the flesh, honors and independence, it follows that the observance of these opposing counsels of poverty, perfect continence, and voluntary obedience makes striving after perfection easier, safer, and more efficacious.²⁷

BARRIERS TO PERFECTION

But what things hinder or prevent progress in the spiritual life? There are three primary blocks or barriers which must be removed or overcome. The most obvious factor would be sin of which there are two kinds or levels--venial sin and mortal sin. Sin is generally defined as willful transgressions of the law of God."²⁸ This assumes that a conscious or unconscious awareness of the law already exists in the person who sins. (For a Protestant there are problems here that cannot be gone into.) Mortal sin, as defined by St. Thomas, is "an act whereby we turn away from God, our last end, willingly attaching ourselves in an inordinate manner to some created good."²⁹ As a result of mortal sin a person loses his state of habitual

²⁷Ibid., p. 71.

²⁸Tanqueray, op. cit., p. 342.

²⁹Ibid.

grace, thereby endangering his soul to eternal punishment unless the relationship is mended or restored.

A venial sin is less serious in that it does not "deprive us of the state of grace."³⁰ Venial sins are classified in two categories, deliberate and "of surprise"³¹ (unconscious). Deliberate venial sin is almost as great an evil as mortal sin in that it is a genuine act against God. To commit such a sin is to express disobedience and ingratitude which is to flaunt one's own will before God. Its results are to lessen fervor and dull the soul to the actual grace of God.

Unconscious venial sins are the result of thoughtlessness and weakness. They are to be avoided by vigilance but they are not considered to be an obstacle to perfection.

Penance is the primary means of receiving grace which repairs the broken relationship with God. Since the motives or reasons for penance and the various acts of penance are not of particular significance to the practice of spiritual direction, a discussion of these will be omitted. The reasons will become evident when the nature and practice of spiritual direction are discussed.

A second barrier or deterrent to progress in the spiritual life is concupiscence (lust) which is considered

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid., p. 349.

to be the desires of the flesh and unregenerated will. The seeking of pleasure to fulfill selfish desires, the desire for things in themselves, vain curiosity and pride (egotism, vanity, etc.) are expressions of concupiscence. The devil and the unredeemed world seek to cause one striving to live the spiritual life to succumb to concupiscence. A person avoids this by being on guard and continually bringing one's thoughts back to God who is the source of all good and the object of striving.³²

Scruples, "a disease, physical and moral, which produces a sort of derangement of conscience and causes one to harbor vain fears of having offended God,"³³ are the last of the obstacles to be discussed. They are physical when the nervous system is affected and moral when only the thoughts are affected. The anxiety produced by the mind dwelling on one's failures often causes poor judgment and unclear thinking. The

only remedy is 'obedience', full and absolute obedience to an enlightened spiritual director. The light of conscience has become dim and we must seek enlightenment elsewhere. A scrupulous person is exactly like a ship without a rudder or compass. The spiritual director, therefore, must win his confidence and must know how to wield authority over him if he is to effect a cure.³⁴

The function of the director is now to help restore in the

³²Ibid., pp. 101-118.

³³Ibid., p. 443.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 446-7.

person the ability to discern his real self without the fears.

This brief survey of some of the major doctrines of Spiritual Theology illustrate its complexity and the need for some person to serve as a teacher of the way and as a guide in seeking to follow the way of perfection. The person designated by Spiritual Theology to give this assistance is a spiritual director who follows the way of perfection himself and is also well grounded in theology in general.

NEED FOR DIRECTION

Not everyone is called to seek perfection but for those who are spiritual direction is almost a necessity, for one of the first requirements is to begin to know one's self. Persons who have not thought before in terms of spiritual growth have little understanding of who they are, what areas of their lives they need to work on, and what help is available in their quest. An

intimate self-knowledge is necessary for any serious reformation of life, for avoiding dangerous illusions, and for a solid grounding in humility. Therefore, from the very beginning, souls should set about acquiring a general knowledge of their character and their predominant passion. They should learn to recognize the more obvious manifestations of their main defects and in particular the external manifestations of these defects. Then, enlightened by grace, they will gradually deepen their knowledge of self. Finally, they should be

helped to recognize their own good qualities and to use them in their pursuit of perfection.³⁵

Daily examination of conscience during meditation, spiritual reading and the guidance of a spiritual director are the most common ways of acquiring self-knowledge. The danger of the process degenerating into a mere psychological inquisition is present but can be avoided by keeping before the object of the quest, God's presence. "The director's duty here will be to help the soul make a self-analysis."³⁶ This is to be done in such a manner as to aid the person to insights into his own nature, the important matters and errors. "To him mainly falls the task of guarding the soul from the not inconsiderable dangers inherent in these analyses--scrupulosity, over-introspection, despair, or loss of interior peace."³⁷

The purpose for the necessity for self-knowledge is to begin working on purification of the soul to allow charity to have full dominion over it. Grace must be able to enter to transform sinful thoughts and habits by increasing the spiritual understanding and the performance of good or loving actions.

The soul must be purged of the worldly spirit, of worldly judgments and desires... In this sense, the 'world' is made up of those who, at least in practice, seek their happiness in the goods of this life and make them their goal, whether these

³⁵Guibert, op. cit., p. 268.

³⁶Ibid. ³⁷Ibid., p. 269.

goods be material, intellectual, or artistic; and who despise supernatural goods or at least regard them as secondary or accessory only.³⁸

Purification may be accomplished by acts deliberately chosen and intended as grace urges and assists these acts of will and mind. Sometimes God acts to do the purifying by special gifts of the Holy Spirit in which case it is known as passive purification. Prayer is always a part of active purification and a channel for grace to accomplish passive purification.

The main effects of these purifications on beginners will be: purity and tenderness of conscience; mortification of the passions, that is to say, the passions, though not yet completely under control, are no longer a source of proximate danger of grave sin, nor do they greatly impede the soul from acting according to the dictates of charity; the mind is no longer over-attentive to earthly things; a humble, filial love of God combined with trust in Him and deep compunction of heart.³⁹

The second degree of the spiritual life is the degree of the proficient. They have, through prayer and self-discipline, reached the stage where ordinary temptations can be resisted and deliberate sins are rare. "They have a firm, penetrating, and personal knowledge and conviction of the fundamental truths of the spiritual life."⁴⁰ There are two categories of proficient, one, those who by will power and obedience to external authority have mastered themselves, and the other, those who by interior

³⁸Ibid., p. 272.

³⁹Ibid., p. 273.

⁴⁰Ibid.

graces, genuinely desire the spiritual life for the inner expressions of love and peace. The former are called pious souls and would be directed more by ascetical disciplines and the latter, called fervent souls, seem to have an inherent understanding through mystical experiences. Neither can claim spiritual superiority since they give and receive love out of sincere devotion to God and men. Characteristics of the proficient include deep humility and self-abnegation. "Like charity, humility has a double application: towards God and towards the neighbor. By humility towards God we acknowledge that we are creatures,"⁴¹ and that we are dependent upon the Creator and we see our sins in their true light. In the exercise of humility towards our neighbor we know that what we have and are is by the grace of God and not by our own merits.

Self-abnegation is not so much a virtue as a general habit of will by which man, acting against the natural leaning towards self-love and egoism, subordinates all the spiritual and material goods of this life to the promotion of God's glory in everything. When man practices self-abnegation he no longer regards himself as the center of the universe, but rather recognizes that he is destined for and bound up with a higher good, namely, God's glory. Hence an act of self-abnegation is one in which we make full and notable sacrifice of our own self-interest.⁴²

These virtues or characteristics are not superior to those mentioned and are generally recognized as pre-eminent because of their key place in the spiritual life. They are

⁴¹Ibid., p. 280.

⁴²Ibid.

a measure or gauge of the degree of charity for "the greatest impediment to charity is self-love,"⁴³ which means putting love of self above love for God.

The third degree is that of perfection and of which there is a real question whether one can achieve or arrive at this degree in "this life."⁴⁴ Generally it is held that the degree of the perfect is possible but those who enter it are few in number and even those who do, do so only in degree. Some writers say this state is a purely mystical state entered only by "the gift of infused contemplation"⁴⁵ but admit it is possible to come to it in other ways but these others are not the normal. Usually this state of perfection "is identified with the unitive Way."⁴⁶

Actually a discussion of this third degree is not particularly relevant to a discussion of spiritual direction since once a person reaches it, in theory he is being directed entirely by the Holy Spirit.

PERFECT CHARITY

The following is a description of what is meant by perfect charity which is the end goal of the spiritual life and the state of perfection toward which Spiritual Theology seeks to direct a person.

⁴³Ibid., p. 281.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 287.

⁴⁶Ibid.

By the triple act of charity, we desire the highest good first for God Himself, then for ourselves, and our neighbor, and this triple act is so essential to the virtue of charity that, like the virtue itself, it will continue eternally in heaven. And because the powers of intellect and will, will be increased in the fathomless intuitive vision of God, we shall elicit that triple act as one act, since our will and intellect will be directed towards these three objects simultaneously, each in its own order.⁴⁷

LIFE STYLES OF THE DIRECTED

What pattern of life will bring a person to the state of perfection in light of the learning tasks enumerated in this brief survey of Spiritual Theology? The ascetical life and the mystical life, each with its own theology, have been treated as a unity by most twentieth century writers for at least two reasons. They are both grounded in the same dogmatic and moral theology and they have a considerable amount of interdependence. The spiritual life is really a mixture of these two approaches and is evident when active is substituted for ascetical and contemplative replaces mystical. These terms, active and contemplative, denote deliberate or willful acts for a person who seeks to progress in the spiritual life.

The active life expresses itself in the overt "exercise of the virtues both in discursive meditation and in external works"⁴⁸ and/or in zealous "spiritual or corporal

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 289.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 295.

service"⁴⁹ to others. These actions or activities "may be the fruits of interior charity, conceived and enkindled in contemplation, by which man is moved to help his neighbor for the love of God."⁵⁰

The contemplative life may be expressed as either the study of truth, ...particularly the study of revealed truth⁵¹

or is more likely as

zeal for prayer: prayer understood in the wide sense and in general..., the practice of the presence of God; or the interior life, all our acts which directly tend towards the worship and love of God;..."⁵²

The pursuit of perfection is in itself active in the sense one must act to learn and to pray.

Every Christian life is a mixture of the active and the contemplative with a domination of one or the other in most. Even so contemplatives have traditionally been held to be superior

because they 'remain and shall not be taken away' for all eternity. But the acts of the active life are concerned with the means of arriving at the end, and so they will cease when the end is attained, whilst the acts of the contemplative, concerned as they are with God, the End Himself, will never cease even when the End is possessed.⁵³

These are, briefly, the basic tenets with which the practice of spiritual direction is concerned. Next, an attempt will be made to describe what spiritual direction

⁴⁹Ibid. ⁵⁰Ibid., p. 296.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid., p. 300.

⁵³Ibid.

is and is not and to illustrate how it is able to assist a person as he seeks to progress in the spiritual life.

CHAPTER IV

THE NATURE AND PRACTICE OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Spiritual direction is an educative process that is integral to the practicing of the tenets of Spiritual Theology. It functions in a one-to-one teaching relationship in much the same way as the teacher-disciple or guru-disciple relationship common to oriental religions. The primary function is teaching for the early stages of the spiritual life with a secondary function being personal guidance in the practice of the principles of the spiritual life. The qualifications and role of both teacher and disciple are well delineated but not rigid. The nature of the spiritual life as set forth in Spiritual Theology makes the practice of spiritual direction a necessity and the values of it are inherent in the process.

Pious Christian souls, not satisfied with the numerical confession of their sins, open their conscience to the confessor manifesting to him their difficulties, temptations, special inspirational graces, and asking him to guide them to virtue and perfection. This special guidance is spiritual direction in the strict sense of the work, and when it becomes habitual with the same director, we call it Personal Spiritual Direction.¹

¹Pascal P. Parente, Spiritual Direction, Revised Edition (New York: St. Paul, 1961), p. 14-15.

DIRECTION AS A FORM OF GUIDANCE

Thus understood it implies a personal relationship between two individuals. Its purpose is to help an individual attain the degree of perfection to which God is calling him.

What has been described above is that form of guidance that gives a special quality of encouragement to one who is inexperienced in the spiritual life. The other dimension is providing instruction in the basic tenets which describe the nature of the perfection desired and the how of progressing in the way of perfection. This guidance and instruction is given to influence the intellect, the will and the emotions of the one being directed in order that balance will be maintained.

Because of the similarity of the practice of spiritual direction and that of confession the offices of the men who fulfill these functions tend to be confused. The role of the confessor is the regular duty of every priest who holds a parish or has any position where religious oversight is required. He hears the confessions of sins committed and temptations faced and gives absolution or prescribes penance as a means of forgiveness. On occasion a confessor will give spiritual guidance when requested but this is not done as a general rule and when it is given on

a regular basis it becomes spiritual direction. The office of confessor has a specific function in the Roman Catholic Church but the average priest is not equipped to practice spiritual direction. The confusion over the two roles does not exist in the minds of those who know the process of spiritual direction.

THE TITLE OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

On occasion other titles have been used for the spiritual director, the earliest and most persistent being spiritual father. This title has its roots back in the desert of pre-monastic days and came to be used by a man who credited his progress in the spiritual life to his director. He considered himself the spiritual son whose birth into the spiritual life was due to his director. St. Augustine referred to St. Ambrose as his spiritual father and the very term Desert Fathers denotes their pioneering leadership in the development of the pattern of religious life still followed to a degree. One writer likes the title of "Spiritual Master" in preference to spiritual director.²

²Nicholas Gill, The Spiritual Prefect in Clerical Religious House of Study (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1945), p. 28.

THE NECESSITY OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Living the spiritual life is often an arduous struggle fraught with many difficulties and many fail in their quest.

One of the chief causes of the failure of so many is to be found in the fewness of spiritual directors to guide our souls, with the pilotage of divine grace, over this unknown sea of the spiritual life.³

This quotation comes from one who wrote in the first half of the seventeenth century and is as applicable today as when written. This state of affairs exists even though there is as much to support the thesis that a spiritual director is very necessary to those who would begin the way toward perfection.

For the attainment of a happy immortality St. Francis de Sales says

It is necessary that we should submit ourselves to the direction of a faithful friend, who, by the prudence and wisdom of his counsels, may guide us in all our actions, and secure us from the ambushes and deceits of the wicked one.⁴

Whether the goal is the future life or living and functioning better in this life, a spiritual director is necessary to maintain steady progress in the spiritual

³M. Godinez, Praxis of Mystical Theology, Cited by Frederick William Faber, Growth in Holiness (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1950), p. 335.

⁴Francis de Sales, Introduction to a Devout Life (New York: World, 1952), p. 36.

life. This need is not limited to religions and this awareness has substantial support in the tradition of the church. As Tanqueray says,

It was not only in communities that this need of a spiritual guide was felt, but likewise in the world. The letters of St. Jerome, of St. Augustine, and of other Fathers, to widows, virgins and other persons living in the world, are ample proof of it.⁵

While spiritual direction is admittedly needed by both the laity and the religious its practice has been generally confined to those in religious orders. Not all these desire or seek spiritual direction but those who feel they are called to the deeper relationship with God will find a director necessary. These

beginners need a director from whom to learn things of which they are ignorant--that is, tools of their salvation and spiritual progress,... They need a director so as to be protected from falling into sin, or from too little concern about the practice of virtue. ...They need a guide so as to be corrected, for one offense always leads to another, and he who falls into error corrects himself with difficulty unless he is aided by someone who is more stable.⁶

Growth in the spiritual life is both long and difficult with many temptations and problems to be overcome "To venture thereon without an experienced guide is highly

⁵Adolphe Tanqueray, The Spiritual Life (Tournai, Belgium: Desclee, 1930), p. 259.

⁶Adolph Kestens, Spiritual Guidance (Paterson, N.J.: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1962), p. 333; quoting St. Bonaventure.

imprudent."⁷ It is extremely easy to deceive oneself about one's own physical ills. Even a doctor who becomes ill goes to another doctor for treatment even if to receive confirmation for what is suspected. Thus a person who is venturing toward wholeness in the spiritual life has need of a good spiritual physician.

All this is not to say progress cannot be made without a spiritual director because God can work directly within the life of the individual. But from long experience in the business of the formation of souls, the Church has discovered spiritual direction is the normal way toward perfection. Direction is especially needed during periods of crisis such as when intellectual doubts arise or during periods of spiritual aridity.

The need for a director by the beginner (the purgative way) is easily understood but what of the further level or ways?

In the illuminative way, a guide is still needed, in order to discern which are the virtues especially suited to this or that person in particular, as well as the means of practicing these virtues, and the proper method of self-examination.⁸

According to Tanqueray "direction becomes even more necessary in the unitive way"⁹ because the person entering here must learn to exercise the Gifts in the Holy Spirit and

⁷Tanqueray, op. cit., p. 259.

⁸Ibid., p. 260. ⁹Ibid.

how to maintain a continued condition of docility or receptivity to the inspirations of grace. A director is "the more necessary when one undergoes the first passive trials, when ... fear of God's judgment, ... inability to reason in meditation, and contradictions from without burst upon a desolate soul..."¹⁰ Both St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross continued under the guidance of a spiritual director in order to maintain balance.¹¹

CHOOSING A DIRECTOR

Since there is a genuine need for a spiritual director for one who enters the way of perfection he must be chosen with care. Faber has noted that the choosing of a director is a serious step and should be done with much prayer.¹² On this same subject Parente says, "Before choosing a director one should pray long and fervently, asking God to send one He has chosen to be his spiritual guide."¹³ Just as it is believed that the Holy Spirit is the true guide in the process of spiritual direction so is it believed that He will guide one in choosing his spiritual director.

Just as serious as choosing a director is the task of changing a director; it should be done prayerfully for

¹⁰Ibid. ¹¹Ibid.

¹²Faber, op. cit., p. 340. ¹³Parente, op.cit., p.60.

there is always the possibility that the reason for seeking to change is a fault in the character of the penitent. To change under such circumstances would not solve one's problem. As to the wisdom of changing directors one writer says: "Yes, if the one we have does not give us satisfaction, that is, does not help us."¹⁴ There is the conviction that if one cannot find a good director, God will in other ways care for one's spiritual needs.

The emphasis is always on choosing one's director as this relationship is voluntary on the part of the penitent. On this Parente says:

As for the habitual personal director of the soul, the initiative should be taken by the penitent, just as the services of a guide or teacher are solicited by him who needs a guide or teacher and not forced on him by others, a thing he should justly resent.¹⁵

This fact is in contrast to the requirement of obedience to a superior who has jurisdiction over the exterior life only.

THE ART OF DIRECTION

"Spiritual direction is both a science and an art. Both can be learned, and anyone who wishes to become

¹⁴Leonce de Grandmaison, We and the Holy Spirit (Chicago: Fides, 1953), p. 44.

¹⁵Pascal P. Parente, Spiritual Direction (St. Meinard, Ind.: Abbey Press, 1950), p. 42.

capable of teaching souls must apply himself to both."¹⁶
 It is a science by virtue of the theology which it supports and is an art in that its practice requires a very high degree of sensitivity to both the theological foundations and the inner spiritual natures of penitents. An intellectual knowledge of spiritual theology supported by both dogmatic and moral theology is necessary to teach souls the principles which they are called to practice. A thorough understanding of the nature and practice of the various levels of prayer is also required for in these the souls being directed receive the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

DIRECTION IN PRAYER

There are three levels of prayer which are practiced and in their practice a director must guide the penitent. Mental prayer or meditation is considered the means by which one reflects on the essential truths of the faith and this opens oneself to God. Prayer itself is usually defined as vocal prayer and includes expressions of worship and petition. The third level is contemplation consisting of natural and infused contemplation, the former being inspired prayer and the latter a heightened sense of God's presence and grace causing one to feel at one with the source, God.

¹⁶Father Gabriel, The Spiritual Director (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1951), p. 9.

Important to direction is the practice of prayer and meditation by both the director and penitent. The penitent is guided in the choosing of a director, becomes receptive to the infusion of grace and the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and experiences re-enforcement of intellectual learning through the practice of prayer and meditation. The director received, through his practice of prayer and meditation, inspirations that aid in direction and makes use of prayer to intercede on behalf of the penitent.

THE DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS

Essential to the practice of spiritual direction is the gift of the discernment of spirits. Of this Parente says:

It is indispensable for both the spiritual director and the penitent to acquire a practical knowledge of the rules concerning the discernment of spirits. This is part of that prudence they must possess if they wish to avoid deceptions.

Discernment of spirits is the ability to discriminate between the sources of all promptings that we experience in our soul. ...This power of discrimination is either acquired by long experience or infused, in which case it is one of the charisms mentioned by St. Paul.¹⁷

The function that discernment of spirits serves is in aiding the director in "knowing" intuitively the spiritual nature of the penitent. (This involves a much deeper knowing than rapport.) The penitent needs this gift to

¹⁷Parente, op. cit., p. 51.

gain knowledge of himself. Self-knowledge is vital to progress in the spiritual life so that one may avoid entertaining illusions of his state and, according to his character or changing moods, falling into premature feelings about his goodness or possibly into discouragement that causes one to exaggerate his faults.¹⁸ Either condition may result in "inaction, lack of sustained effort, carelessness."¹⁹

An honest and accurate knowledge of ourselves, on the contrary, is an incentive to perfection. The good qualities we discover move us to thank God and show our gratitude by generous cooperation with His grace. Our defects and the realization of our helplessness show us how much we have yet to accomplish, and how important it is to lose no opportunity of advancing.²⁰

THE STEPS TOWARD SELF-KNOWLEDGE

The road toward self-knowledge begins with the manifestations of conscience by the penitent to his spiritual director. It is

described as the disclosure of one's state of mind and soul by revealing one's virtues, defects, temptations, trials, passions, difficulties, doubts, inclinations, intentions, in order that the person to whom the disclosure is made may acquire a satisfactory knowledge of one's spiritual condition and lead the way to one's spiritual perfection.²¹

Only those disclosures that include "the state of one's

¹⁸Tanqueray, op. cit., p. 222. ¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid. ²¹Gill, op. cit., p. 98.

unwitnessed spiritual, mental and moral processes under secrecy for the purpose of obtaining spiritual direction and help"²² is called manifestation of conscience. The revealing of one's external acts is confession and not manifestation of conscience.

The spiritual director is asked to help one come to self-knowledge because the experienced and impartial observer, especially if he has the gift of discernment, can generally see within the depths of conscience better than the penitent. His ultimate success, however, "depends on his knowledge of spiritual matters, his ability to impart this knowledge and the influence of his personality and example on others."²³

The instruction the director should impart to those he guides to perfection ought to be practical and to the point, explaining briefly the general principles of the spiritual life as applied to various degrees of perfection, every time the soul has reached one of those degrees that make such an explanation necessary or useful. The instruction should not remain purely theoretical, but should come down to the particular case of this or that soul.²⁴

When needful the director should give general religious instruction in dogma and the experience of the saints. "In this manner the soul will learn, eventually, to guide itself by applying those principles in the more ordinary cases."²⁵ Actually, "it is the mark of a good director

²²Ibid. ²³Ibid., p. 85.

²⁴Parente, op. cit. (1950), p. 46. ²⁵Ibid.

that he can teach others to get along without him."²⁶

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF A SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

The qualifications of a good spiritual director are: (1) he must be a learned man; (2) he must be experienced in the spiritual life; and, (3) he should have the acquired or infused gift of discernment. Parente says: "The director must be a person seriously interested in his own spiritual perfection, one who has already made some progress in it."²⁷ These qualifications are generally accepted by all writers and indicate a solid foundation for any spiritual leader. In addition to these a spiritual director should know that there are different paths to the goal of perfection and he should be acquainted with some of these so that he may direct penitents in the way they are being led.

The spiritual director must not try to force a penitent to follow the way in which he, himself, is being guided.

the director should learn the different ways of God about each individual soul and guide them thereon, without ever attempting to make a penitent leave the way on which God has manifestly placed him.²⁸

Not all directors are qualified to direct all souls.

²⁶Grandmaison, loc. cit.

²⁷Parente, op. cit. (1950), p. 56. ²⁸Ibid., p. 78.

Since there are different ways by which souls may grow toward perfection there will be instances in which a director may be unfamiliar. He is then obligated to admit this fact and suggest the penitent find someone else to guide him. The director is at all times striving to help the soul achieve liberty and freedom of spirit and to free one to find another director is to recognize this aim and the variety of paths.

THE PRACTICE OF DIRECTION

The director does not know how or for what purpose a soul is being prepared. His knowledge is generally limited to the present state of the soul and what inspirations and graces are at work in the present. He realizes that "spiritual direction is a cooperation with the activity of the Holy Spirit of God in the sanctification of the souls..
 ."²⁹ He must also "realize that some are more eager and more generous, others more calm, more slow--, that all are not called to attain the same degree of perfection."³⁰

The penitent, himself, does not know how God is guiding his soul but is aware that he desires guidance and is called to perfection. The source or cause of this desire may not be known by the penitent but the Church teaches that grace is the quality that acts to cause the

²⁹Ibid., p. vi. ³⁰Tanquerey, op. cit., p. 263.

promptings of the soul and that the Holy Spirit is the source. The promptings motivate the penitent to seek intellectual understanding of the nature of the life to which he feels called and guidance in how to practice this life.

Because the Church is aware of the needs of men called by God it provides specific educational opportunities to satisfy to a degree the intellectual content. It also provides through the Sacraments the external means by which grace might be received. For those who are called to a higher expression of the spiritual life than simple practice of external duties. These persons seek the guidance of a spiritual director who knows the ways of the interior life. As noted, a director, even for these persons, is not an absolute necessity.

The penitent who does place himself under a director should, until genuinely led to do otherwise, resolve to obey in all matters of conscience the guidance he receives. A director is not infallible but he is experienced in the spiritual life or he should not have been chosen. The penitent should be obedient, not blindly but respectfully, for what he hopes to gain from the relationship.

Not all direction is of a positive nature, for the penitent may need correcting and chastising when in error or manifesting self-will. The practice of the moral and theological virtues is important to the growth in the

spiritual life and when these are not being worked out diligently the director is obligated to call attention to these failures and then follow these corrections with positive ways of getting back on course.

In the beginning of the spiritual life "it is not well to read many books about prayer; but keep to the few oral advices of our director."³¹ This general rule for prayer can be amended to include the whole of the spiritual life. Reading, in general, should be limited to the suggestions of the spiritual director because the beginner lacks the experience and knowledge to filter out what is not helpful or needful at the present state of development. The proficient is sensitive enough to the Holy Spirit to filter what is read and also in selecting what is most helpful.

It is by its fruits that the tree of guidance is to be judged. Thus we can have great trust in our spiritual director when we know from past experience that in following his direction we become more self-forgetful, more docile to the Holy Spirit, more peaceful, humbler and simpler, more faithful to our essential devotions, and more closely united with God. We can rely on this guidance when it agrees in its broad outlines with what the Church teaches, when it clarifies and makes more efficacious within us the great, universal, and absolutely certain supernatural instincts, and when it agrees in detail with the counsels we have already received from wise and authoritative persons.³²

³¹Faber, op. cit., p. 255.

³²Grandmaison, op. cit., p. 43.

CHAPTER V

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PRACTICE OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

According to Kestens there was a decline in ascetical doctrine in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries¹ and consequently a decline in the practice of spiritual direction. Its practice did not disappear but it seems to have come under serious criticism from some quarters as indicated by the following quotation from Faber (originally published in 1855).

The practical and devotional system of the Catholic Church is almost a greater trial of our faith than its doctrinal system. No part of it has been more attacked than this office of a spiritual director, not only by heretics outside the church, but by ill-read or lukewarm Catholics in it.²

In a guide to Roman Catholic periodical literature there is a noticeable absence of articles on spiritual direction until the middle 1940's. The earliest articles in continuing periodicals found and used as resources for this thesis are from 1948 and 1950. This revival of interest in the practice of spiritual direction may be

¹Adolph Kestens, Spiritual Guidance (Paterson, N.J.: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1962), p. 26.

²Frederick William Faber, Growth in Holiness (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1950), p. 325.

attributed to the appearance of several books on ascetical-mystical theology about 1920--Spiritual Guidance by Adolph Kestens and The Spiritual Life by Adolphe Tanquerey (1923 and revised in 1930). The latter became the standard text on ascetical-mystical theology in Roman Catholic seminaries.

Two dissertations which explore the functions of the spiritual director in seminaries were published in 1945, one in Canada (The Spiritual Director in an Ecclesiastical Seminary by Frederick D. Sackett), and the other in the United States (The Spiritual Prefect in Clerical Religious Houses of Study by Nicholas Gill). Both have been cited as sources of historical data primarily. This revival of interest in spiritual direction appears to have begun with the seminaries.

The use of the term recent applies primarily to those developments which have occurred since 1940 as reported in periodicals and books. A brief historical background of the spiritual director in seminaries will be followed by a discussion of the relationship of psychology and spiritual direction. Next the relationship of counseling and pastoral counseling will be explored to illustrate how these similar practices affect each other in the thought of Roman Catholic writers. Finally the rise of the practice of spiritual direction for the laity will serve as

concluding arguments that spiritual direction is a valid educative process, unknown to most Protestants and a majority of Catholics.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION AND THE SEMINARY

Spiritual directors are required, for the first time, in all Italian seminaries, according to instructions in encyclical letters by Popes Leo XIII and Pius X.³ When the Canon Law of the Church was codified in 1917 it included laws requiring the office of spiritual director in all seminaries (canons 1358, 1360).⁴ Two systems are in use in seminaries: (1) The French system in which professors share the responsibilities of the office; and (2) the Roman system in which it is a special office. The director cannot be the head of the seminary (rector) nor does he exercise any external authority over ordinaries (student priests).⁵ Also, the office of prefect (person responsible for general oversight of the formation of priests) and director are not the same.⁶ The spiritual director in a

³Frederick Dwight Sackett, The Spiritual Director in an Ecclesiastical Seminary (Ottawa: The University of Ottawa Press, 1945), p. 54.

⁴Joseph Clifford Fenton, "The Aims and Methods of the Spiritual Director in a Major Seminary," National Catholic Education Association Bulletin, XLIX (August 1952), 83.

⁵Ibid., p. 85. ⁶Sackett, op. cit., p. 87.

diocesan seminary has the task of forming the souls of clerics but it is limited to the internal forum.⁷ According to Sackett the director in a seminary has the task of being vocational counselor and he is not to be overkind--severe but not cruel.⁸

The qualities of a spiritual director are "a rich store of knowledge, a keen understanding of dogmatic, moral and ascetical theology, psychology and of human nature as such."⁹ He must be of the highest moral character and is to infuse this into the life of the seminary.¹⁰

In a very recent discussion on the similarities and differences of Protestant and Catholic seminaries the following statement was made:

A distinctive and most revealing aspect of Catholic seminaries is to be found in the role of the Spiritual Director. It is distinctive when contrasted to Protestant seminaries, and it is revealing in what it declares about the Catholic methodology of spiritual formation.¹¹

The same writer continues,

The Spiritual Director is another example of the Catholic conviction that living in Christ is not achieved by happenstance or by the random and

⁷Nicholas Gill, The Spiritual Prefect in Clerical Religious House of Study (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1945), p. 39.

⁸Sackett, op. cit., p. 116. ⁹Ibid., p. 101.

¹⁰Fenton, op. cit., p. 85-86.

¹¹Walter D. Wagoner, The Seminary: Protestant and Catholic (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1966), p. 39.

peripheral attention of a non-disciplined community.¹²

While this last statement suggests the traditional Catholic idea that theology is static and indoctrination is the primary teaching function of the Church it does not have this limited implication. The statement refers to the role of the spiritual director and, as has been seen, this is not dealing with static doctrine but living experience moderated by historic traditions within which there is allowance for variations. The principles behind spiritual direction can function as well under Protestant theology as under Catholic theology.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION AND PSYCHOLOGY

The advancing knowledge of depth psychology has both aided and hindered spiritual direction. Although it is popularly surmised that a crisis is imminent in the apostolate of the director as a result of depth psychology, the demand for direction is greater than ever before. Depth psychology and guidance into the life of grace are different things. Neither need be a hindrance to the other, but both may gain by mutual confrontation if the possibilities and the limitations on both sides are properly understood.¹³

One way in which depth psychology in particular has been used in an attempt to discredit spiritual direction is in questioning the spiritual phenomena sometimes associated

¹²Ibid., p. 42.

¹³K. A. Wall, "Spiritual Direction," New Catholic Encyclopedia, IV, 890.

with the spiritual life. Labels such as delusions, illusions and hallucinations are used to cast aspersions on claimed experiences of infused grace and inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Granted there can be and sometimes are similarities in the genuine phenomena of a life of grace and psychotic mental disorders and aberrations, they are not the same.

The old theologians were well aware of the strange phenomena of obsession and compulsion, but having no rational explanation of them as we have today, they attributed them to diabolical influence.¹⁴

While behaviorist psychology with its emphasis on man as a social animal may have caused questioning of the nature of man, it has not shaken the Catholic understanding of the spiritual nature of man. Tanqueray affirmed that: "Man is a mysterious compound of body and soul. In him spirit and matter closely unite to form but one nature and one person."¹⁵ Almost forty years later O'Riordan writes: "But man is not spirit alone: he is body-spirit, a human person. He has bodily and emotional existence that conditions his spiritual existence."¹⁶ One statement was written in the early days of psychology while the latter was written after the advent of modern depth psychology. Both

¹⁴Sean O'Riordan, "Psychology and Spiritual Guidance," Furrow, XIII (August 1962), 477.

¹⁵Adolphe Tanqueray, The Spiritual Life (Tournai, Belgium: Desclee, 1930), p. 29.

¹⁶O'Riordan, op. cit., p. 471.

affirm the findings of modern psychology.

Tanqueray expresses a very good knowledge of the scope and use of psychology as an aid to the formulation of a science of the spiritual life. He says,

It is not only necessary to possess a keen mind, but also a sound judgement and great tact and discernment. One must add to this the study of practical psychology, the study of temperaments, of nervous ailments and morbid conditions, which exert such a great influence over mind and will.¹⁷

Psychology is seen as an ally to the practice of spiritual direction rather than an enemy as noted. One writer recognizes the value of psychology and other disciplines to spiritual direction. He says,

To become skillful in the art of ... direction, none of the anthropological sciences, whether they be physical, physiological or psychological (conscious or unconscious, individual or collective) should be neglected in the training of the director.¹⁸

He goes on to say that,

..., direction should never be turned into psychoanalysis, for then the recovery of psychic health will be confused with advancement in the spiritual life, human techniques with the work of the Lord in the soul, natural confidence with theological faith.¹⁹

Psychotherapy and/or psychoanalysis and spiritual

¹⁷Tanqueray, op. cit., p. 471.

¹⁸Bruno de Jesus-Marie, "St. John of the Cross and Modern Psychology," Cross Currents, VII (Spring 1957), 156.

¹⁹Ibid.

direction are different fields of endeavor in that they have a different purpose for existing. A spiritual director should have knowledge of them, particularly with Freud and Jung, so as to know wherein lies their competence and when to make referrals for therapy or analysis.²⁰

The similarities go beyond the fact that therapy and spiritual direction make use of the one-to-one relationship. The Psychologists, analysts and psychiatrists often are required to re-educate a person's moral values in order to help him learn to copy. For this reason these professionals must in a sense serve as a spiritual director during the re-educating process.²¹ This is a strong argument for the team approach in treating the whole person.

DIRECTION AND PASTORAL COUNSELING

There is greater confusion between pastoral counseling and spiritual direction than found between direction and analysis or direction and therapy. The tendency is to combine the two disciplines into one as the following statement indicates.

..., spiritual direction is simply pastoral counseling with greater spiritual depth than is usually brought to the immediate situation. The ultimate objective of direction is not merely the solution

²⁰Ibid., p. 164.

²¹Charleen Schwartz, "The Confessor and the Analyst," Integrity, X (April 1956), 12-22.

of the present problem, but the release of the clients' own spiritual dynamism for maximum growth as a person and especially a christian.²²

Even in this statement the uniqueness of spiritual direction is not discounted when it notes that direction is "simply pastoral counseling with greater spiritual depth."

In surveying both the books and the articles on guidance and counseling I found that the similarity of spiritual direction and pastoral counseling was recognized. Yet, the two were more often seen as separate functions with spiritual direction making use of some of the principles of pastoral counseling to improve its practice. One writer prefers the use of terms such as "counseling," "advising" or "coaching" to direction because it gives lay people great difficulty.²³ This same writer leans heavily toward the non-directive counseling techniques which is a contrast with the normal practice of spiritual direction. Another writer makes a definite comparison of counseling techniques and spiritual direction when he says,

Some might compare spiritual direction to directive counseling inasmuch as it makes use of teaching and direction, but it should combine them with as many non-directive techniques as possible, such as: client centeredness; acceptance; permissive atmosphere; etc.²⁴

²²Jean Laplace, The Direction of Conscience (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), p. 10.

²³Eugene F. Bleidorn, Help Me, Father (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1960), p. 13.

²⁴John T. Byrne, "The Counselor and Spiritual

A distinction between what constitutes counseling and direction is made in the following statements.

Counseling deals with problems that are primarily emotional and which, more often than not, should be treated on the natural level; while spiritual direction though recognizing, appreciating, integrating and building upon the natural, is primarily concerned with the supernatural.²⁵

The relationship of counseling and spiritual direction is a complementary one...they go hand in hand even though preferably given by different persons. Not everyone needs counseling, of course--only those who have problems which are primarily emotional and motivational. On the other hand, everyone can profit from good spiritual direction.²⁶

According to these statements the two serve a different function despite the similarities between them. This idea is further reinforced when it is understood that counseling frees the will of the counselee to make decisions. Of necessity, counseling must precede spiritual direction.²⁷

The basic similarity would have to be the role of the counselor to counselee and director to penitent and this may be one reason for the advocating the combining the roles. As one writer notes,

Director," Homiletic and Pastoral Review, LIX (March 1959), 542.

²⁵Kevin O'Rourke, "The Priest and Spiritual Direction," Cross and Crown, XVII (September 1965), 317.

²⁶Byrne, op. cit., pp. 539-540.

²⁷John F. Harvey, "Spiritual Direction and Counseling," Bulletin--Guild of Catholic Psychiatrists, XI (January 1964), 19.

...what makes spiritual direction effective, when it is, is basically what makes good counseling effective. Spiritual direction works when there is a genuine interpersonal relationship between the people involved. There must be some real contact on a genuinely human level.²⁸

Perhaps this condition is a major factor why some writers such as the one cited at the beginning of this section seek to combine the two functions.

Another reason for supporting the combining of these two functions can be found in criticisms of traditional spiritual direction. Laplace cites four criticisms which briefly are: (1) failure to respect individual freedom; (2) it is too mechanized, follows a too-precise form; (3) "it tends to fix our attention on such feelings (illusions, etc.) to an exaggerated extent"; and, (4) it "implies the existence in the Christian community of privileged members, to the detriment of a mass incapable of attaining the heights to which direction leads."²⁹ In the light of this study these are real dangers or traps into which spiritual direction might fall and against which most early writers have warned. These errors were often made because of the imperfections of the people trying to follow the principles of spiritual direction. Almost the same pitfalls are

²⁸Eugene C. Kennedy, "Counseling and Spiritual Direction," The Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings, XVIII (1963), p. 118.

²⁹Laplace, op. cit., p. 25.

present in pastoral counseling and to be effective must be avoided.

As I see the picture, pastoral counseling and spiritual direction are different functions utilizing some of the same principles of character formation. Both have a valuable contribution to make to the mental and spiritual wholeness of men but they cannot effectively be combined. One person may be able to fulfill both functions in the life of an individual but there would still be two separate processes at work. Counseling would be helping restore mental and emotional balance and direction would be assisting the Holy Spirit in guiding the person in spiritual growth.

DIRECTION AND THE LAITY

Providing spiritual direction for the laity has been neglected both in the past and in the present in the Catholic Church. In the past there was the general attitude that the laity could not reach perfection because they could not practice all the virtues and particularly the counsels and remain in the world. Some of those who were natural mystics (experienced mystical inclinations from early childhood) did attract enough attention to receive spiritual direction once the reality of their experiences was verified. Others, who had mystical leanings and who

had enough wealth or position, were able to secure the attention of priests and bishops and receive direction.³⁰

Some of these lay mystics would be discovered when they would go for confession and reveal their experiences in order to be assured they were not being possessed by the devil or demons. In this way their spiritual state would come to the attention of clergy and ecclesiastical authorities. Those whose experiences were genuine and who were strong enough to withstand the pressures of being investigated and remained orthodox would be taken in hand by a spiritual director. (The unorthodox were usually called witches or at the least heretics and received the appropriate punishment.)

Within the Catholic Church today there is call by laity for spiritual direction. Several articles written by lay women request that priests recognize the need of the laity for genuine spiritual direction. One such writer feels that spiritual direction is an obligation of the priest, for lay people need to be helped to grow so that they can accept more and more grace. This writer expresses the feeling that with the help of spiritual direction the laymen can assume their apostolate (lay commitment of service) in a more responsible fashion.³¹

³⁰St. Francis de Sales, Introduction to the Devout Life (New York: World, 1952), p. 16.

³¹Sally Whelen Cassidy, "The Catholic Revival,"

Another writer says that: "Spiritual direction is a foreign term to all too many American Catholics. It is a luxury which they associate only with such saints as Teresa of Avila, Francis de Sales, or perhaps a holy king and queen..."³² She goes on to say that: "Hit-and-miss confessions to a different priest everytime, for all their sacramental validity, do not achieve the depth of self-knowledge necessary to real spiritual progress."³³ The reason for this need for spiritual direction which this writer gives shows exceptional depth. She says,

Order is the first law of heaven, and orderliness is what spiritual direction gives to a person living in the world--something the average Catholic needs perhaps even more than the Religious, whose life is organized for him by a rule and a well-planned daily regimen.³⁴

Priests have difficulty in providing direction to laity because they lack a real understanding of lay life.

Another writer says:

...spiritual direction for lay people reduces itself to the problem of how to integrate into the ancient science of the spiritual life the new knowledge of the human person attained through modern psychology, and further how to integrate this knowledge into the difficult art of spiritual direction, while making adaptations for modern conditions and the lay state.³⁵

Catholic World, CLXXVIII (January 1954), 293-5.

³²Diana Serra Cary, "People Need Spiritual Direction," St. Anthony Messenger, LXIX (March 1962), 21.

³³Ibid. ³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Dorothy Dohen, "Spiritual Direction," Spiritual Life, IV (September 1958), 204.

An additional problem is the fact that the approach for laity is different because they think differently. Since they are not theologians, they must have direction which is more action oriented.³⁶

In 1921 a lay service order was formed to provide spiritual direction for laity. This new method of direction was developed to meet the needs of those who desired guidance but because of heavy time schedules of priests were unable to receive it properly. This came to be called "Spiritual Direction through the Apostolate."³⁷ This order--the Legion of Mary--has as its basis the spiritual formation of its members through individual and group direction and selfless service to others. The office of Spiritual Director is held by a priest, a nun or an ecclesiastically approved lay person and the function of the person holding this office is to provide guidance in spiritual reading, prayer and service. Individual direction is given as needed and desired, often in the required weekly meetings.³⁸

The Legion of Mary has the reputation of being able

³⁶Francis N. Wendell, "Spiritual Direction of Lay Apostles," Integrity, II (September 1948), 29-34.

³⁷Lawrence Forristal, "Spiritual Direction and Apostolate," Furrow, XIII (May 1962), 259.

³⁸Legion of Mary, The Official Handbook (Dublin: Concilium Legionis Mariae, 1965), pp. 169-172.

to take ordinary material, provided there is goodwill and a generous heart, and turn it out in a heroic mould. There must of course be constant spiritual direction, which is part of the Legion system and which involves painstaking work and infinite patience.³⁹

This writer later says, "those well acquainted with the Legion system know that Legionnaires help to form from one another and so help the priest in his work of direction."⁴⁰

The Legion of Mary is one real attempt to provide spiritual direction for the laity of the Catholic Church. There are probably others not so well known and therefore not publicized as is the case of the Legion.

In the past ten years there has been a great increase in the number of books on the spiritual life.

This growth has come at a time when it was needed and desired by the faithful. If it is realized that there is not only a need for spiritual direction, but also a real hunger for it on the part of the religious, directors will soon begin to be more numerous, for God will send them.⁴¹

Spiritual direction is needed and often desired by laity as much as by religious. "People often complain about insufficient attention being given spiritual direction, about a lack of interest in pastoral consultations, without which adult christians cannot be properly formed."⁴²

³⁹Forristal, op. cit., p. 260. ⁴⁰Ibid., p. 263.

⁴¹Thomas Merton, "Spiritual Direction," Sponsa Regis, XXX (June 1959), 251.

⁴²Andre Godin, The Pastor as Counselor (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), p. 137.

As the number who desire direction increases, the conviction persists that "God will send" those who can serve as spiritual directors to laity as well as religious.

CHAPTER VI

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION AS AN EDUCATIVE PROCESS

CONCLUSIONS

In the section on Direction and psychology of Chapter Five the educative possibilities of therapy and psychiatry were compared to the educative dimension of spiritual direction. This dimension has been a part of the practice of direction from its origin and remains so today. In the following statement this dimension is made graphic.

The director performs his office by teaching the principles of the spiritual life, not in abstract or in general, as in the classroom, in lectures, or in sermons, but in the concrete: applying them here and now to the individual soul. He urges the soul on by arousing fervor and helping the will, insuring that the one directed will not stop resolving but go on to acting. The director is more than a teacher; he is an educator in the full sense.¹

The basic educative principle of spiritual direction is dialogue--dialogue between director and penitent. "The dialogue of direction possesses, then, in contrast to the objective order of the institution and the group, that eminently personal character that should belong to all

¹Father William of the Infant Jesus, "Spiritual Direction," Cross and Crown, XII (March 1960), 18-19.

pedagogy."² Added to this human dialogue is the dialogue between the penitent and the Holy Spirit and the director and the Holy Spirit who is the "Great Teacher" of souls. The human dialogue is used to prepare the way for the dialogue that produces growth in the soul--dialogue with the Holy Spirit.

The basis for the understanding that the real teacher of the soul is the Holy Spirit is found in John 14:26 (RSV). Thomas Merton affirms this reality and at the same time cites another passage in support of his conclusion. He wrote,

His [the spiritual director's] direction is in reality nothing more than a way of leading us to see and obey our real Director--the Holy Spirit, hidden in the depths of our soul. We must never forget that in reality we are not directed and taught by men, and that if we need human "direction," it is only because we cannot, without man's help, come into contact with that 'unction (of the Holy Spirit) which teaches us all things.' (1 John 2:20)³

Both the director and the penitent must have this understanding before the process begins. Direction cannot produce in a person an experience of God; it can only prepare the person for the experience of God's grace which is believed to be present in the soul already. The Holy Spirit is the bearer of grace and the teacher of souls.

²Jean Laplace, The Direction of Conscience (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), p. 36.

³Thomas Merton, "Manifestations of Conscience and Spiritual Direction," Sponsa Regis, XXX (July, 1959), 278.

Armed with this conviction and having met the conditions of the process a person cannot help progressing in the spiritual life.

This success or the assurance of progress is based on the understanding that "the director is not teaching a new law, but the way of observing it, which is the way of the Spirit."⁴ To remain faithful to the practice "of direction--its forms may vary, but its reality is as old as the life of the Spirit--is simply to remain faithful to the laws of life itself."⁵

To place one's self under the guidance of a good spiritual director "frequently prevents one from merely going through the motions of religion."⁶ The necessity of reporting regularly on the progress made, problems faced and needs felt to another person acts as a motivating factor which prevents laziness, rationalizations and other excuses for not maintaining regular study and prayer habits. It also necessitates regular self-examination which is the primary stimulus for real progress in the spiritual life. A fear of confessing lack of self-discipline to a director is actually the facing up to a failure in one's own commitment made to God.

⁴Laplace, op. cit., p. 37.

⁵Ibid., p. 39.

⁶Father William of the Infant Jesus, op. cit., p.23.

The role of the director does not include meting penance or discipline. He is only a human instrument voluntarily chosen to guide one in the spiritual life and his authority is only that which the penitent feels as a result of requesting direction. Spiritual direction has real value then in encouraging self-discipline which makes one consistent in the spiritual life. Again to quote Merton:

Direction will school us in being true to ourselves and true to the grace of God. The discipline of sincerity and simplicity which a good director will discreetly impose, perhaps by indirect means, is one of the most vitally necessary things in the interior life of religious today.⁷

The ultimate source of external action is the motivating force of internal conviction and stimulus. That external action which has a transforming effect on society is the persistent action being produced by persistent and consistent inner motivation. Thus "the director is needed to form us, not as static Christians in a condition of righteousness, but as active participants in Christ's task of incarnating himself in the whole of society."⁸

The whole purpose of spiritual direction is to penetrate beneath the surface of man's life, to get behind the facade of conventional gestures and attitudes which he presents to the world, and to bring out his inner spiritual freedom, his inmost truth,

⁷Merton, loc. cit.

⁸Hugh Kay and James Walsh, "A Plea for Direction," Way, II (July 1962), 197.

which is what we call the likeness of Christ in his soul. This is entirely a supernatural thing, for the work of rescuing the inner man from automatism belongs first of all to the Holy Spirit. The spiritual director cannot do such a work himself. His function is to verify and to encourage what is truly spiritual in the soul. He must teach others to 'discern' between good and evil tendencies, and to distinguish the inspiration of the spirit of evil from those of the Holy Spirit.⁹

A CRITIQUE

Since spiritual direction is not viewed as a means of grace as the Sacraments and acts of service and prayer are, it may be contrasted, compared and evaluated as an educative process. Because it is an educative process it is founded upon certain principles or theories of education and personality. This critique will attempt to examine these underlying theories in light of contemporary views.

Other considerations as to theology and the relationship of spiritual direction to counseling will be noted briefly. Following these considerations I will indicate why the practice of spiritual direction is a challenge to Protestant educational practices.

A. Direction As Dialogue

In the section on conclusions it was stated that the basic educative principle of spiritual direction is dialogue.

⁹Thomas Merton, "Notes on Spiritual Direction," Sponsa Regis, XXXI (November 1959), p. 89.

A brief description of the process will provide a basis for evaluating the conclusion. When the relationship of director to penitent is examined it is found to be one of mutuality in which the director enters into the life of the penitent. This becomes a reality when the penitent opens his inner being to the director so that he becomes known for himself. In return the director opens his inner being to the penitent in the process of demonstrating his awareness of the needs of the penitent. Usually the director shares something of his past and present struggles as a means of communicating why the penitent must follow guidance and the naturalness of his present state which is in need of this guidance. Spiritual direction is thus founded on the precept that dialogue must occur if guidance is to take place.

The term, dialogue, as used here is contemporary, having been lifted up by Martin Buber. As a practice it has ancient origins but was not used specifically with spiritual direction until after Buber's work. Its centrality in the practice of spiritual direction is recognized by recent writers (see page 81). One writer says, "Spiritual direction works where there is a genuine interpersonal relationship between the people involved" (p. 74). This strongly suggests dialogue as a part of the process.

Dialogue has been defined by Reuel Howe as "the serious address and response between two or more persons, in which the being and truth of each is confronted by the being

and truth of the other."¹⁰ The brief description of the relationship in spiritual direction appears to fit this definition. There is serious address and response between two persons. The being and the truth of each confronts the other as the maturity and knowledge of the director confronts the needs and desires of the penitent.

Since the practice of spiritual direction takes the form of providing information and guidance by a director who becomes both teacher and counselor, a question may be raised as to whether this is true dialogue. In the understanding of Howe the teacher-student relationship must not become a deterrent to dialogue. He says,

There must be dialogue between teacher and student, and between the meaning as formulated in theory out of men's past experience and meaning as it emerges out of their contemporary experience.¹¹

He later says,

And so the true teacher accepts ... the responsibility to be aware of the meaning of a course [of study] from the student's point of view and to be alert to the meaning of his side of the learning situation.¹²

From Howe's understanding of dialogue, the director would be described as a "true teacher" because he of necessity must take into account not only the point of view of his student but his uniqueness as an individual as well.

¹⁰Reuel L. Howe, The Miracle of Dialogue (Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1963), p. 4.

¹¹Ibid., p. 17.

¹²Ibid., p. 38.

Both the past and present of the director and penitent are always in their relationship, so the criterion of dialogue between teacher and student is inherent in the process of spiritual direction.

To fully answer the question as to whether true or genuine dialogue occurs in the teacher-student or director-penitent relationship I turn to Martin Buber's description as a measurement. He says,

There is genuine dialogue--no matter whether spoken or silent--where each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a mutual relation between himself and them.¹³

Genuine spiritual direction takes place only when the director and penitent (the participants) take account of each other where they are. The penitent turns to the director with the desire for a mutual relation in which he will be guided toward perfection (spiritual maturity). The director, by agreeing to become the one who directs, is establishing a mutual relation with the penitent.

In a quotation from Reuel Howe, mention was made of the place of a course of study in the teacher-student relationship which is a part of the dialogue between them. In the director-penitent relationship this course of study is

¹³Martin Buber, Between Man and Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 19.

Spiritual Theology and makes up a large part of the content of the dialogue early in the process of spiritual direction. This content is a part of the reason for thus the meaning of the practice of spiritual direction. This duality in the process is consistent with the dual nature of dialogue as described by Buber. He said, "The meaning of dialogue comes ... from a two-fold source: both from the participation of the persons involved and from the subject of their communication."¹⁴

Implied in Buber's description of genuine dialogue is the I-Thou relationship, a relationship which presumes the presence of God. Reuel Howe, who fully acknowledges his dependence on Buber, says,

Dialogue is a condition and relationship for the appearance and work of his [God's] Spirit, which calls men to and enables them for, dialogue out of which comes the fruits of dialogue and of the Spirit.¹⁵

The true director of souls (according to St. John of the Cross, cited on p. 21) is the Holy Spirit. Spiritual direction also presumes the presence of God in the relationship of its participants. The practice of spiritual direction is fully one of genuine dialogue.

B. Direction and the Transcendent Dimension

The presence of God and the working of the Holy Spirit in the process of spiritual direction is presuming a

¹⁴Ibid., p. 76.

¹⁵Howe, Op. cit., p. 106.

dimension not sensorily evident. This presumption has two aspects, (1) the existence of this additional or transcendent dimension, and (2) the presence of a facet or aspect of man's nature capable of identifying with and responding to or participating in this dimension. In this section I am concerned with finding support for the existence of this dimension in two writers who are influencing contemporary thought. The other question will be dealt with in the next section.

With the understanding that the Holy Spirit is the true director of souls and that the spiritual director is only an aid to the Spirit in the process, the transcendent dimension becomes essential to the process. This dimension in mystical-ascetical thought is the realm of angels and of supernatural phenomena. While one might interpret this in terms of a three-story view of the universe, such an interpretation would be incorrect. Generally, the realm of the supernatural is the special province of God, Jesus Christ and the saints, but this state or dimension interpenetrates the natural or sensory dimension in some mysterious way known only to God.

This view is not significantly different from that of Martin Buber. He refers to the world as "It," a thing to be experienced by man. "The world has no part in the experience. It permits itself to be experienced, but has no

concern in the matter."¹⁶ Consciousness is not attributed to the world or nature but it is possible to say it is "the world of relation."¹⁷ In this understanding we cannot speak of a mutuality of relation with nature even though it may be true, yet we can do so with the other two spheres of relation. In "our life with men we can give and accept the Thou."¹⁷ The third sphere is

our life with spiritual beings. There the relation is clouded, yet it discloses itself; it does not use speech, yet begets it. We perceive no Thou, but none the less we feel we are addressed and we answer--forming, thinking, acting. We speak the primary word with our being, though we cannot utter thou with our lips.¹⁹

These last two spheres appear to be an indescribable transcendent dimension of the world which could be interpreted as the mysterious, indescribable supernatural realm of Roman Catholic thought. The following quotation from Buber affirms this indescribable nature which could be interpreted as noted. He said,

In every sphere in its own way, through each process of becoming that is present to us we look out toward the fringe of the eternal Thou; in each we are aware of a breath from the eternal Thou; in each Thou we address the eternal Thou.²⁰

This same kind of thinking is expressed by Paul

¹⁶Martin Buber, I and Thou (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 5.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

Tillich, who makes no reference to Buber. He says to raise a question of the existence of God is improper.

It is as atheistic to affirm the existence of God as it is to deny it. God is being-itself, not a being. ... As the power of being, God transcends every being and also the totality of beings--the world. ... Being-itself infinitely transcends every finite being. ... On the other hand, everything finite participates in being-itself and its infinity.²¹

The transcendent is known in relation and referred to as Thou by Buber whereas for Tillich it is being-itself which can be participated in by a being (a self). Both imply an essential essence existing in man which is able to relate to and/or participate in God. Traditional expressions about this transcendent dimension refer to it as the kingdom of God with the Holy Spirit as the immanent presence of God at work in and through it.

The highest level of Christian living, in the Roman Catholic view, in which the Holy Spirit acts to guide a person is the unitive way. At this level a person is said to move in and out of the transcendent dimension wherein he experiences moments of unification with God. William Barclay says,

Unless a man lives in the Holy Spirit he can never experience this unification of life, this all embracing presence of God, this world in which he is

²¹Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951, I, p. 237.

always aware that in God he lives and moves and has his being.²²

He goes on to say that,

Without the Holy Spirit it is not possible for man fully to cope with life. Certainly a man may exist without the Holy Spirit but equally certainly he cannot live without the Holy Spirit.²³

Contemporary non-Catholic thought thus confirms the transcendent dimension which is open to man's experience and in which God is present in His immanent nature, the Holy Spirit. Perhaps these views could be used to sharpen the Roman Catholic view, but I do not see them in any sense mutually exclusive. From my perspective, they are but differing interpretations of the same reality.

C. Direction and Personality Theory

Spiritual Theology and the practice of spiritual direction are founded on the premise that a man is an immortal soul that will live eternally in heaven or hell. This soul is of infinite worth and the core of the personality. The strivings of the soul cause persons to seek perfection (as previously defined) and hence lead spiritual directors to aid in the search.

In its natural existence the soul and body comprise a unit with the soul considered to be the higher nature and

²²William Barclay, The Promise of Spirit (London: Epworth Press, 1960), p. 121.

²³Ibid., p. 122.

the body the seat of the lower nature. The task of a person is to strengthen the soul so as to enable it to bring under submission the desires of the body. Another way to describe this is to say the soul yearns for oneness with God in the realm of the supernatural. The final means of escape from the natural is death and this is no escape unless one has grown in spirituality and thus becomes worthy to enter heaven.

The above consists of generalizations, whereas Roman Catholic thought is much more refined and detailed; but for purposes of comparing and contrasting this with other views of personality theory it will serve.

Sinnott, a Protestant, says, "The soul is the essence of the self, the precious part of man, looked on by many as his immortal portion."²⁴ He earlier had described the body as "the window from which the soul looks out of the universe and employs material objects to satisfy its spiritual hunger."²⁵ He also abstracts the mind and spirit from the whole but concludes that man is a unity.

By listing what the soul includes, James Ashbrook²⁶

²⁴Edmund W. Sinnott, Matter, Mind and Man (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), p. 142.

²⁵Ibid., p. 82.

²⁶James B. Ashbrook, "The Functional Meaning of the Soul in the Christian Tradition," Journal of Pastoral Care, XII (Spring 1958), 16.

shows it is the seat of consciousness. Norman Pittenger²⁷ and Granger Westberg²⁸ equate soul or spirit with mind. Tillich says the "soul is actual life-power and mind and body are its functions."²⁹ These views do tend to equate the soul with the self as used by contemporary psychology so I propose to look to humanistic psychology for a description of the function of man's nature to serve as a model of contemporary thought. I have chosen Horney, Maslow and Moustakas as representatives of the best of this field to compare and contrast with the Roman Catholic view.

Of man's essential nature Maslow says,

We have, each of us, an essential biologically based inner nature, which is to some degree 'natural', intrinsic, given, and, in a certain limited sense, unchangeable, or at least unchanging.³⁰

Karen Horney says the real self is "that central inner force, common to all human beings and yet unique in each, which is the deep source of growth."³¹ Yet another writer says, "Man has an intrinsic nature which must be recognized and

²⁷ Norman Pittenger, The Christian Understanding of Human Nature (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), p. 45.

²⁸ Granger E. Westberg, Minister and Doctor Meet (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), pp. 52, 53.

²⁹ Tillich, op. cit., p. 250.

³⁰ Abraham H. Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being (New York: Van Nostrand, 1962), p. 3.

³¹ Karen Horney, Neurosis and Human Growth (New York: Norton, 1950), p. 17.

treasured. Man's inner nature is the key to human joy, happiness and fulfillment."³²

Man has a basic inner nature that is his real self and it is of worth. This corresponds generally with the theological views cited above and the Roman Catholic view which calls it the soul. To call it the soul is to interpret it to be the part of man which is capable of experiencing eternal life or life wholly in the transcendent dimension.

In the perspective of this psychology, "It is man's duty and responsibility to nurture, cultivate, and find expression for this inner nature and potentiality."³³ This duty and responsibility is expressed as the need of one's intrinsic nature to know and become its real or potential self, to experience self-realization (Horney) or self-actualization (Maslow). Maslow presents the idea of an hierarchy of needs which he calls lower and higher;³⁴ the lower needs are called basic needs and the higher needs are called growth needs. He contends the higher needs remain submerged until the lower needs have to some degree been satisfied. He says,

³²Clark E. Moustakas, "Summary: Exploration in Essential Being and Personal Growth," in his The Self (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), pp. 282-3.

³³Ibid., p. 284.

³⁴Abraham H. Maslow, Motivation and Personality (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), p. 146.

An old-fashioned way of summarizing this is to say that man's higher nature rests upon man's lower nature, needing it as a foundation and collapsing without this foundation. That is, man's higher nature is inconceivable without a satisfied lower nature as a base.³⁵

Generally lower needs are identifiable with psychophysical aspects of man's nature and the higher needs with the intrinsic or spiritual aspect of man's nature. Thus, "the implication here is that man's higher nature, ideals, and aspirations, and abilities rest not upon instinctual renunciation, but rather upon instinctual gratification."³⁶ This understanding is in contrast to the view that natural or lower desires or needs must be brought under submission by the higher nature before its needs or desires are realizable.

Instinctual gratification in Maslow's thought is not license for indiscriminate behavior; the gratification of basic or lower needs must be accomplished by means consistent with growth needs. Ungratified basic needs are deficiencies in a personality and "satisfying deficiencies avoids illness; growth satisfaction produce positive health."³⁷ Such ideas suggest the need for a value system which takes into account the wholeness of man and of this Maslow says,

³⁵ Maslow, op. cit., p. 163.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 29.

The human being needs a framework of values, a philosophy of life, a religion or religion-surrogate to live by and understand by, in about the same sense that he needs sunlight, calcium or love.³⁸

Through the observation of man, psychology has discovered what his needs are to become a whole person. It has described the lower needs as well as describing how they can be satisfied and now humanistic psychology has recognized the necessity of growth needs. Somehow the needs are realizable and some of the means for realizing them have been discovered. For example, Maslow says, "Self-knowledge seems to be a major path of self-improvement, though not the only one." And continuing, he says, "Self-knowledge and self-improvement is very difficult for most people. It usually needs great courage and long struggle."³⁹

Self-knowledge is one of the purposes of spiritual direction and for the same reasons psychology gives. So here is a second area of general agreement in the two views of personality theory. The other is the affirmation of an intrinsic, inner nature even though it is called by a different name. (Actually humanistic psychology is not concerned with the eternal or infinite aspects of the transcendent dimension as this is a metaphysical or theological thought-form and not verifiable by observation.)

When body and soul are viewed as a unity, the

³⁸Ibid., p. 192.

³⁹Ibid., p. 156.

hierarchy of needs as described by Maslow are more consistent with man realizing his potential or real self than the view traditionally associated with spiritual direction. In light of the views discussed in this critique I am convinced the traditional view of personality theory should be modified. To do so would not invalidate the process and would in certain respects lessen the anxiety level of the penitent undergoing spiritual direction.

D. Direction and Educational Theory

The educational theory which underlies spiritual direction consists essentially of the principle of dialogue as expressed in the teacher-student and counselor-client relationships. The possibility and necessity of dialogue transpiring in the teacher-student relationship has been briefly explored above. The conclusion was that dialogue does take place when the teacher is authentic (a true teacher). This is possible only when the course of study is secondary to the relationship. Reuel Howe has said,

The dialogical teacher speaks and acts in his capacity as educator and departs from his plan without anxiety because he trusts both the working of the Spirit and the inner workings of his student.⁴⁰

When the counselor-client relationship is lifted up as a model for comparison with spiritual direction, care must be taken to distinguish between the kinds of needs each

⁴⁰Howe, op. cit., p. 140.

is concerned with. The counseling relationship can be educative, as described by Howard Clinebell,⁴¹ with the providing of information as the means of satisfying needs. The main point of comparison, however, is counseling's stress on the establishing of rapport, the entering into the client's life or relative mutuality. This mutuality presumes the more mature--less mature status even in spiritual direction.

The counseling relationship usually presumes a basic-need deficiency and in theory is designed to function at this level. This is supported by Maslow when he says, "a major characteristic of people who seek psychotherapy is a former and/or present deficiency of basic-need gratification."⁴² Those with basic-need deficiencies should have these satisfied before seeking the benefits of spiritual direction.

Calling spiritual direction an educative process (as is done by a contemporary Catholic writer) is to make it contemporary with the more recent expressions of educational theory. Hopkins places considerable stress on the function of process in his field theory of education. He said, "Process ... is a functional reorganization of past and

⁴¹Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), pp. 189-204.

⁴²Maslow, op. cit., p. 35.

present experience in a new need situation in the direction of self-enhancement."⁴³ Process in the philosophic thought of Whitehead⁴⁴ is a function of "becoming." The process through which a person experiences his real self or true being is referred to by Allport as "becoming."⁴⁵

Another feature of Hopkins' field theory of education is interaction. For him the life-process is interactive in increasing complexity as a person grows. He says,

A great educational problem is how to provide an environment in which the cooperative interactive process may become the basic learning process in all home and school activities.⁴⁶

He goes on to say, "The quality of the process is found in the kind of self which the individual becomes."⁴⁷ The quality of the self determines the direction the self chooses in enhancing itself. Thus "direction and quality of the process are inextricably interwoven for they are aspects of the movement of the total life to regenerate, enrich, and enhance itself."⁴⁸

⁴³L. Thomas Hopkins, The Emerging Self (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), p. 127.

⁴⁴Donald W. Sherburne, A Key to Whitehead's Process and Reality (New York: Macmillan, 1966), pp. 16-17.

⁴⁵Gordon W. Allport, Becoming (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), p. 90.

⁴⁶Hopkins, op. cit., p. 66. ⁴⁷Ibid., p. 67.

⁴⁸Ibid.

Spiritual direction is essentially the same process being described by Hopkins with the addition of the transcendent dimension.

A theorist in Christian education places equal stress on interaction and one might suppose Hopkins drew from a common source or one influenced the other's thinking. Lewis J. Sherrill writes,

Communication requires a two-way current of interaction between persons; namely, an educating and an imparting. Education is the leading out, the leading forth or calling forth of one self by another self. Impartation is the giving forth of at least a part of one self who is in communication with another.⁴⁹

He continues,

But in the Christian community when deeper communication is taking place, both education and impartation mean that there is a profound encounter between self and self within a field of concern in which God as forth going Spirit is participant.⁵⁰

Sherrill is describing precisely the nature of the relationship expected in the practice of spiritual direction. I, therefore, conclude that spiritual direction is an educative process founded on sound educational theory.

E. Other Considerations

No attempt has been made to compare or contrast Spiritual Theology with any of the various formulations of

⁴⁹ Lewis J. Sherrill, The Gift of Power (New York: Macmillan, 1959), p. 85.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Protestant theology. Since this dissertation is concerned primarily with the educational aspects of spiritual direction, such a process would do little to further illuminate the subject.

Brief reference was made to counseling in the context of educational theory but, as shown in Chapter Five, counseling and direction are two separate functions making use of some of the same principles. Some of the principles were described above in this critique. I feel the primary contribution of pastoral counseling to spiritual direction will be in calling attention to the value of the permissive climate in the counseling relationship as a means of aiding personal growth.

Counseling has as a main concern the restoring to wholeness emotionally ill persons whereas spiritual direction has as its primary concern the spiritual maturity of persons. Spiritual direction can be viewed as building upon or as an extension to pastoral counseling.

The group counseling branch of pastoral counseling may be able to contribute its principles for a modified version of spiritual direction. This might be a major contribution if serious work were to be begun in this direction. Depth bible study groups and other types of growth groups are pointing in this direction, but as yet the principles of spiritual direction have not, so far as I know, been incorporated in these groups.

F. A Challenge to Protestants

As has been shown, spiritual direction is an educative process founded on proven principles and making use of time-tested techniques. Even when the principles are abstracted and described and the techniques are identified and defined (as counseling has accomplished for itself) the process remains relevant and effective when practiced. The eternal and universal characteristics of spiritual direction will sustain its educational value in the Roman Catholic Church. These same characteristics make spiritual direction a desirable and much needed means of education for the Ecumenical Church.

To be most effectively used by the Protestant churches it would of necessity have to be adapted in ways this critique has indicated, especially in modifying the underlying personality theory. At the same time it should be noted that contemporary personality theory points to the necessity of spiritual direction or some other process utilizing its principles to aid persons in satisfying growth needs.

The problem of a lack of qualified spiritual directors could be partially alleviated by providing a spiritual director for each Protestant seminary as is the practice of Roman Catholic seminaries. A course on the nature and practice of spiritual direction should be offered to advanced counseling students and other qualified persons. A requirement would be that those taking such a course undergo

direction themselves after the pattern of a psychotherapist being required to undergo therapy as part of his preparation.

Spiritual direction is at present an integral part of the educative process of the Church of the Savior in Washington, D.C. This Church (congregation) has been called the prototype of the renewed church by some writers. In an appendix I will present the principles of spiritual direction adopted by this church and evaluate them in light of the views expressed in this dissertation.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION¹

1. Spiritual Direction implies the recognition of a certain spiritual authority--at least in a few specific areas. The practice of obedience is to some extent inherent in your relationship with your Spiritual Director, who must be a person in whose sensitivity you have confidence. Your seeking a director indicates a willingness to be guided and to undertake new disciplines.

2. It is an open relationship where your fears, feelings of rebellion, critical attitudes, misgivings, etc., are confessed. These matters should always be confined to a Spiritual Director lest they contaminate the fellowship. Your Spiritual Director is one to whom you want to reveal your hidden self.

3. The fact that a person is your best friend does not necessarily mean that he is your best choice of a Spiritual Director. Your Spiritual Director should be able to look at your difficulties with a certain detachment and not be unduly swayed by personal sympathies.

4. Ordinarily spiritual direction is not a mutual relationship, though each person acting as a Spiritual Director should have direction. When the relationship becomes mutual it becomes one of spiritual companionship. While this is good, the element of authority in spiritual direction is lacking.

5. The responsibility of a Spiritual Director is to help another grow in Christ. Special attention is given to a program of study, prayer, service, the disciplines of the church, and to growth in personal and group relations.

6. The Spiritual Director has the responsibility of intercessory prayer, of staying in God's presence on behalf of the person in order that there may be divine light in his directing.

¹Elizabeth O'Connor, Call to Commitment (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 201-2.

7. The Spiritual Director must be in enough contact to know the currents and movements in the life of the directed. This is a person for whom he is responsible before Christ. Like teachers, spiritual directors will be judged with more strictness. There will be exceptional times when contacts may be as often as once a day, and times when they need to be made only once a month or once every three months.

8. While the Spiritual Director has certain responsibilities, he acts primarily in response to the person wishing direction. The Director is not a school master handing out lessons and demanding performance. It is assumed that the person entering into this relationship has already a commitment to growth through prayer, study, and Scripture reading.

PRACTICAL PROCEDURE FOR CHOOSING A SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

1. Pray fifteen minutes a day, asking that God give to you the name of that person or the names of those persons who can act as your Spiritual Director.

2. Having been given the name of a person, ask him or her to pray about assuming this responsibility. The person you choose must want to know and guide your spiritual life as you would have it known and guided.

PERIOD OF DIRECTORSHIP

Directorship in its experimental period should be undertaken for a three-month period and then perhaps on a yearly basis. Our recommitment time might also be the time when we consider whether or not we want to continue the relationship for another year. It is always possible, however, to terminate it at any time should there be something fundamentally wrong with it, such as a lack of openness. This should be done only after considerable prayer.

EVALUATION

In point four the statement is made that "ordinarily spiritual direction is not a mutual relationship" and appears to contradict the emphasis on mutuality discussed under the section on dialogue. In the context I would say this is more a warning about assuming equal levels of spiritual maturity. (To be unequal in spiritual maturity is an observable fact and is saying nothing about the value of either person.)

These principles are congruent with those presented in this dissertation and show a real awareness of the essentials of spiritual direction. They are but a bare outline and would require amplification for the person serving as a director.

APPENDIX II

BARON FRIEDRICH VON HÜGEL AND SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Most of the information concerning von Hügel's own practice as a director is gained from letters he wrote to his niece and a few of those available written to Evelyn Underhill. His niece, Gwendolen Greene, wrote an introduction to the volume of his letters in which she describes the manner in which she was directed. Evelyn Underhill included in some of her letters and in a short article how she chose and was directed by the Baron. From these sources and from von Hügel's own comments, in various writings, of those who served as his spiritual directors I will describe the influence of spiritual direction on von Hügel and his influence on his daughter, his niece and Evelyn Underhill, the best known of those whom he directed.

While direction by mail is considered to be a poor substitute for face-to-face encounter which characterizes good spiritual direction, in the instances above this method was used to some degree. Since the director-penitent relationships in these situations were well established in personal meetings, direction by mail was used to supplement the sometimes irregular personal contacts.

Baron Friedrich von Hügel was born Catholic and remained so all his life, but was not rigidly Catholic in his

religious life. This may in part be attributed to the fact that his mother was Scottish Presbyterian before she married and his wife, whom he married while he was only twenty-one, had been Anglican.

The Baron's religious life began, according to him, with a conversion experience at age eighteen. The experience was evoked by his witnessing a young woman, obviously a mother whose baby had just died, who ran weeping into an empty church. She, while sobbing, prostrated herself before the altar and after some minutes became quiet. When she arose and walked out her face was radiant and this caused him to know God was a reality.

Following this experience in Vienna,

he put himself in the hands of a Dutch Dominican friar, Father Raymond Hocking, asking him to direct him away from his 'gravely bad habits and inclinations.' This friar, 'a man of gentle birth and of great religious experience, first trained me in the spiritual life. My conversion was deepened by the, to me, utterly unforgettable example, silent influence, and definite teaching of a mystical-minded but scholastically trained Dutch Dominican.'¹

No indication is given as to how long Hocking continued to serve as von Hügel's director. The Baron was married in 1873 and settled in England in 1876 but continued to spend "a great deal of time abroad, especially in Italy."²

¹Michael De La Bedoyere, The Life of Baron von Hügel (London: Dent & Sons, 1951), p. 18.

²Maurice Nedoncelle, Baron Friedrich von Hügel (London: Longmans, Green, 1937), p. 6.

Certainly as von Hügel travelled in Europe he probably continued receiving spiritual direction from Hocking, as he mentions nowhere having another director before 1886.

The Baron resided permanently in England. He probably sought a director closer to his place of residence as his travels and visits to Italy became less frequent. The responsibilities of a family, with three daughters, would tend to decrease the frequency of travel.

"His intimacy with Abbé Huvelin began in 1886, and about the same time he made several spiritual retreats with the Jesuit fathers."³ This relationship was to be the most important one to his own spiritual development. As von Hügel did not begin to publish until he was in his fifties this relationship was viewed by himself and others as deeply significant. "Not only was the Abbé able to steady the troubled soul which put itself in his hands, but he was also able to enlighten it--directing it with great gentleness into a definite course; ..."⁴

One writer summarizes the relationship between von Hügel and Huvelin as follows.

The baron's relations with Huvelin and the spiritual direction under him remained regular and even closer during these still formative years, so much so that he recalled his 'second conversion' as having taken place at the age of forty, not thirty-two--and, though

³Ibid., p. 8.

⁴Ibid., p. 4.

his memory for dates and details of the past was not accurate, the next eight years may well have been years of growing towards a climax of spiritual perception under Huvelin's guidance and the ever present memory of how God worked in the sincere and highly moral soul of the atheist Littre [converted by Huvelin six months prior to his death], while so many fellow Catholics and fellow Christians failed, apparently, to think and practice more some prayer-wheel type of half-supersititious and self-seeking religion.⁵

Those who receive spiritual direction already live disciplined lives or are directed to develop a personal discipline. One phase of direction is the adjusting of this discipline to fit the level of spiritual maturity arrived at during the process of direction. The Baron wrote of one such change during his own direction. He said,

After practicing a daily three-point meditation for some twenty-five years, the new Helper sent me by God advised me that my prayer should now be mainly informal --more the prayer of quiet type; but that there should always remain short vocal prayers each morning and night, Mass and Holy Communion twice a week, with Confession once a week or once a fortnight; and (perhaps most characteristic point of all) one decade the rosary every day--this especially to prevent my interior life from losing touch with the devotion of the people.⁶

The influence of spiritual direction upon von Hügel's spiritual life also is seen in his thought. Douglas Steere says,

The goal of his philosophical and theological thought is always identical. It is to give a clue to the

⁵Bedoyere, op. cit., p. 47.

⁶Baron Friedrich von Hügel, Essays and Addresses (London: Dent & Sons, 1962), p. 234.

breathing space the soul requires, it is to slip the tightly knotted bands of self-serving and move into the heroic self-spending company of the servants of God.⁷

The two following excerpts from von Hügel's thought will serve to illustrate this conclusion by Steere. In his address on "The Central Needs of Religion," he said,

For Religion, in its deepest orientation and need, requires Asceticism, in some form or other; it requires factual happenings, apparently pure contingencies in time; it requires associations, institutions in space; and, above all, it requires a central affirmation of how a Reality other and deeper than the single soul, however rich, than Humanity, however complete, than the totality of all finite intelligence and lives, however superior to man.⁸

In his important treatise on Eternal Life he wrote the following:

Those souls, who live an heroic spiritual life within great religious traditions and institutions, attain to a rare volume and vividness of religious insight, conviction, and reality. They can, at their best, train other souls, who are not all unworthy of such training, to a depth and tenderness of full and joyous union with God, the Eternal, which utterly surpasses, not only in quantity but in quality, what we can and do find amongst souls outside all such institutions, or not directly taught by souls trained within such traditions.⁹

Later Steere presents several elements which he feels

⁷ Douglas V. Steere, Spiritual Counsel and Letters of Baron Freidrich von Hügel (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 7.

⁸ Hügel, op. cit., p. 124.

⁹ Baron Friedrich von Hügel, Eternal Life (Edinburgh: Clark, 1929), p. 377-8.

von Hügel saw as essential to spiritual direction. The spiritual guide

must cultivate the inner mystical life through the practice of private and corporate prayer. ... must also meet the terrible gravity-like pull of sin in the one he is guiding by the historical revelation of God's redemptive power in Jesus Christ. ... must encourage the educated seeker in a deep and abiding respect for the intellectual and scientific element and in the latter case seek even to suggest ... the practice of some objective scientific pursuit ...¹⁰

Next Steere observes that von Hügel had at least four particular gifts as a spiritual director. These gifts were:

In the first instance, he was saturated with the awareness that God was at work, that he was present and operative and laying siege to every soul before, during, and after any spiritual director might come on the scene. ... Then, he knew himself what it was to be a needy one. ..., he also had a profound reverence for the differences in souls. ... Finally, von Hügel was himself expendable in the business of guiding souls.¹¹

Other characteristics of von Hügel's approach to spiritual direction have been given by Evelyn Underhill in a note on the Baron as a spiritual teacher. She wrote,

In his practical dealings with souls, the Baron was accustomed to apply under modern conditions many of the salient ideas of the great French directors; especially Fénelon, whom he greatly admired. Their robust outlook, their hatred of self-occupation and scrupulosity, their insistence on moderation and balance, were all echoed by him. 'Solid, simple, sober souls' were the type he most approved, and sought to form. The 'mystical element' of religion was never allowed to dominate the field, or become the one basis of faith.¹²

¹⁰Steere, op. cit., p. 8. ¹¹Ibid., pp. 10-12.

¹²Evelyn Underhill, Mixed Pasture (New York: Longmans, Green, 1933), p. 231.

She continues her discussion by noting other characteristics of his approach to spiritual direction.

... self-abandonment was the crowning virtue; and 'humbling and bracing' were the twin qualities he looked for in spiritual reading and prayer. Any display of vehemence or feverish intensity was likely to be met by a humiliating request to 'try a little gardening', or, in female patients, 'some quiet needlework'; for secular interests and employments took a prominent place in his conception of the ordered spiritual life, as we may see in the passage devoted to this matter in the great final chapter of The Mystical Element. Moreover, such an ordered life invariably included some cared for, and, if possible, direct intercourse with, the poor; since the Baron strongly believed--in a way not well understood by the modern social worker--in their humbling and spiritualizing influence.¹³

The Baron was in some respects truly ecumenical in his perception of Christianity. He worked with Protestants as well as Catholics and also saw spiritual truth in other religions. Both his niece, Gwendolen Greene, and Evelyn Underhill, were Anglican. Of this ecumenical attitude as related to spiritual direction Evelyn Underhill wrote,

In the advice and training which he gave so generously to many outside his own communion, he showed the fullest willingness to use, discriminate, and take seriously the institutional practices of all branches of the church.¹⁴

In this same connection she continued,

This is merely to say in other words that his supreme interest here lay in souls and their growth--in arousing the deepest reality of man to the overwhelming Reality, the richness and attraction of God--and that he recognized, and valued, many diverse means as serving this great end.¹⁵

¹³Ibid., pp. 31-2. ¹⁴Ibid., p. 232. ¹⁵Ibid., p.233.

One of those von Hügel sought to direct was his eldest daughter, Gertrude. There is no evidence that Gertrude voluntarily entered into the relationship but was known to have been "a sensitive and highly strung child, deeply attracted to religion."¹⁶ Without realizing the damage he was causing, her father "led her on to study the most difficult and subtle metaphysical and theological problems, with deplorable results."¹⁷ It was a number of years before Gertrude got her thinking straightened out and embraced the Church.

The Baron's niece, Gwendolen Greene, mutually and voluntarily entered into her relationship with her uncle. She tells that as a child she had been afraid of her uncle because of his deafness which required him to use a hearing trumpet. It was only after she became an adult that she came to know her uncle. She says, "I was already thirty-eight when first my uncle began to teach me."¹⁸ She says of their relationship,

I always felt like a little child with my uncle, and I never attempted to be anything else. As he said, I had to learn, and I am still in a spiritual childhood. ... His plan was well thought out: he wanted to try to strengthen my character, feed my soul: and I was to learn through history, as well as through religion itself.¹⁹

¹⁶Nedoncelle, op. cit., p. 7. ¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Gwendolen Greene, Letters from Baron Friedrich von Hügel to a Niece (London: Dent & Sons, 1928), p. xliii.

¹⁹Ibid., p. xi.

Gwendolen had personal sessions with her uncle as frequently as possible but because they lived in different cities they used the mails often. Hardly a month would go by after 1919, the year von Hügel began directing her, that she did not have a letter. Generally the letters contained answers to questions Gwendolen asked in her letters and suggestions regarding reading or clarification of theological points.

The subjects discussed by von Hügel with his niece ran the whole gamut of philosophy, religion and history. He often mailed her books, some he gave to her and others he loaned. The subjects covered most were the Church Fathers, especially Augustine and Tertullian, the Greek philosophers, especially Plato, and the mystics, especially Fénelon and Curé d'Ars. The books were on subjects prescribed as a part of the direction but always with the stress on the necessity of maintaining balance in reading. Occasionally he would recommend novels and especially those of Sir Walter Scott.

Gwendolen reminisced about some of the things her uncle spoke of which she remembered or made notes on. Sometimes he shared with her of his own problems, self-understandings and past. Once he told her,

I learnt all that I know from Huvelin. What I teach you is him, not me. I learnt it from him. What a

great saint he was! and what he taught me! 'One torch lights another torch' (Lucretius).²⁰

On another occasion she remembered him saying, "The golden rule is, to help those we love to escape from us; and never try to begin to help people, or influence them, till they ask, but wait for them."²¹

The Baron in his guidance gave witness of his own spiritual depth by his views on a variety of subjects. He taught that one's goal should be for slow, steady progress without deliberately seeking suffering and pain (p. 46). He taught that souls have need of each other because they are interconnected (pp. 29-30). He was convinced that other religions reveal God but imperfectly (pp. 56-57).

In the direction of his niece von Hügel dealt with such practical matters as whether she should continue playing the violin. He felt it provided a creative outlet for her inner nature and for this reason it came within the province of his direction. He regularly affirms, supports, corrects and makes suggestions on both practical matters and concerns such as her prayer life, frequency of church attendance and study habits.

The combination of von Hügel's letters to his niece and her introduction to that volume provided the kind of glimpse into the lives of a director and penitent that is

²⁰Ibid., p. xv.

²¹Ibid., p. xxix.

rare. By reading them one can view from the inside what is involved in the process of spiritual direction and the intimacy of the relationship of those sharing in it.

In the volume of Selected Letters²² only three letters to Evelyn Underhill were published. Most of the letters to her were supposed lost but later were discovered to have been in the possession of her literary executor. These letters were available to Evelyn's biographer; therefore something of the manner of her direction by the Baron is known. In addition, letters which she wrote to him were collected and edited, thus opening to readers her side of the relationship.

The Baron's direction of Evelyn Underhill was quite different from that of his niece. Evelyn was already established as a scholar and expert on the subject of mysticism. She, to some degree, was already serving as a spiritual director for individuals who responded to her writings by writing her personally along with those who participated in retreats which she led.

Even though Evelyn had met the Baron in 1911, just about the time she published her book, Mysticism, she did not ask him to become her director until 1921. In a letter

²²Baron Friedrich von Hügel, Selected Letters--1896-1924 (London: Dent & Sons, 1933).

written to a friend the same year she first met von Hügel, she said of him,

I forget whether I told you that I have become the friend (or rather, disciple and adorer) of von Hügel. He is the most wonderful personality I have ever known--so saintly, so truthful, sane and tolerant. I feel very safe and happy sitting in his shadow, and he has been most awfully kind to me.²³

It would seem that some direction was taking place on an informal basis during these years of friendship. Evelyn wrote in 1913 to the friend,

I had a long talk with the Baron before he left for Italy--much about your letter, which had disturbed him considerably--and a firm but gently lecture on my own Quakerish leanings! His main point seems to be that such interior religion is all very well for our exalted moments, but will fail us in the ordinary dull jog-trot of daily life, and is therefore not a 'whole religion' for men who are not 'pure spirit.'²⁴

For a number of years Evelyn had doubts or questions about which Church she should be affiliated with, Anglican or Catholic. In a letter to Dom John Chapman she shared her advice from von Hügel on this subject. She wrote,

I know what the push of God is like, and should obey it if it came--at least I trust and believe so. When ... I put myself under Baron von Hügel's direction, five years before his death, he went into all this, and said I must never think of moving on account of my own religious preferences, comforts or advantages--but only if so decisively called by God that I felt it wrong to resist--and he was satisfied that up to date I had not received this call.²⁵

²³ Evelyn Underhill, Letters of Evelyn Underhill (London: Longmans, Green, 1943), p. 129.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 144.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 196.

Evelyn had intellectual problems with some of the classical Christian doctrines. In discussing this in another letter she said she was theocentric and

thought most Christocentric language and practice sentimental and superstitious and was very, very handy with too shallow psychological explanations for it.²⁶

She had experienced God vividly after her conversion from agnosticism and looked upon this position (theocentric) as

that of a broadminded and intelligent Christian; but when [she wrote] I went to the Baron he said I wasn't much better than a Unitarian! Somehow by his prayers or something he compelled me to experience Christ. He never said anything more about it--bit I know humanly speaking he did it.²⁷

Shortly after Christmas of her first year under von Hügel's direction she received a letter giving specific details of guidance based on their conversations and her letters. She later summarized this letter and referred to it as "My Rule."²⁸ The letter could be viewed as the content of the Baron's plan of direction for Evelyn. The main points are:

I believe you ought to get yourself, gently and gradually, interested in the poor; that you should visit them very quietly and unostentatiously, with as little incorporation as possible into Visiting Societies, etc. You badly want de-intellectualizing, or at least developing homely, human sense and spirit disposition and activities.

.....

²⁶Ibid., p. 26.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Margaret Cropper, Life of Evelyn Underhill (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), p. 83.

I think you should aim at, and should gently practice, a moderate amount and kind of devotedness as well as devotion;

.....
As to helping educated people--Direction Work. I believe this (practised only on the unsolicited invitation of the persons concerned and in the spirit and way you describe) is distinctly good for you, and that you should be able more than ever to help such souls.

.....
As to Detachment and Particular Friendships. I am particularly glad you have brought up the vehemence and exactingness of your nature and the way in which you have tried to master it. I believe this great vehemence and its offshoots to spring, not only from the ardour of your natural temperament but also (perhaps very largely) from the too intellectual character of your religion.²⁹

Her progress, on the whole list of suggestions and instructions from which the above was abstracted, was to be reported on in six months. Evelyn reported and the following examples illustrated how valid she believed the suggestions were.

Visiting the poor. This prescription has been a complete success. I realize now I was starving for something of the kind.

.....
Direction work. I have not had much to do in this except keeping one or two old cases going: but am now doing more than before in the way of instructions, addresses to guilds, collections of clergymen, etc.(!), I think I had better take all this sort of work that offers as it is direct and inconspicuous and seems really to be needed.³⁰

As indicated from the above, in other instances cited previously and in letters, Evelyn Underhill expresses full satisfaction with the direction she received from von Hugel.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 75-76. ³⁰Ibid., pp. 88-89.

He knew her and was able discriminatingly to help her discover the correct activities and practices that met her specific spiritual needs. Such is the nature of good spiritual direction.

Just as Baron von Hügel had credited Abbé Huvelin with guiding him to greater depths of understanding of himself and of his relationship to God, his niece and Evelyn Underhill credited him for the direction he gave them. For von Hugel spiritual direction helped control an unruly nature; for Gwendolen Greene it directed her to balanced intellectual achievement and a deepening of meaning; and, for Evelyn Underhill it made her faith more balanced by evoking a response to a person, Jesus Christ. All attribute to spiritual direction the balance they had lacked before entering into the process.

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